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Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office.

Jan. 25, 1893.

No. 472.

\$2.50
a Year.

Published Weekly by Beadle and Adams,
No. 98 WILLIAM ST. NEW YORK.

Price,
Five Cents.

Vol. XXXVII.

JOE AND JAP'S BIG FIND.

BY EDWARD WILLETT.



The Boy Cruisers;

OR,
JOE AND JAP'S BIG FIND.

A Story of the Yapura Wilderness.

BY EDWARD WILLET,
AUTHOR OF "FLATBOAT FRED," "TIP TRESSELL,
THE FLOATER," "WIDE AWAKE
GEORGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

STARTING UP THE AMAZON.

It was in the city of Belem on the Amazon—the full name of which is Santa Maria de Belem do Para—the capital and pride of the Brazilian province of Para.

In the waiting-room of a white-walled convent were an old priest, Padre Baranho by name, and two lads.

The priest was like many of his cloth in the convents of Belem, a superannuated missionary from an interior station, sedate and dignified in manner, kind and fatherly in disposition. The lads, who might have preferred to be styled young men, were not only Americans in dress and language, but had that in their style and action which proclaimed them as belonging to the irrepressible nation.

Jasper Hundley, to whom the padre was speaking, was a handsome and manly young fellow of eighteen, quite tall for his age, and with a bright and intelligent face.

His companion, Joe Baggs, was perhaps a year younger than he, and somewhat smaller in stature, but with a wiry form that promised vigor and endurance, and with sharp and restless eyes that made one forget the evident ugliness of his face.

"You have come quickly, my son," the priest was saying.

"Of course I have," replied Jasper. "It is for my mother's sake and my own. I must find my father and rescue him."

"It is a great undertaking, and I am afraid you will gain nothing by it, while you may lose much."

"If I do not succeed, sir, it will not be for lack of trying. If I should not try, and do my best, I would blame myself as long as I live."

"The affair of your father is a strange one, my son, and I confess that I do not fully understand it. When he passed through Belem I was glad to make his acquaintance, and took great pleasure in his society, as he was a man of such extensive information, and such an enthusiastic naturalist. In a short time we became fast friends. I tried to persuade him not to seek the distant region which he desired to penetrate; but he would not be persuaded, and I parted from him with many misgivings.

"I heard nothing from him for more than a year, and was forced to believe that he had perished in the pathless forest or among the wild tribes, when I received the piece of paper which I sent you. It was given to me by a

half-breed trader, who said that he received it from an Indian, and that it had probably been passed from one to another through the tribes along the Yapura, until it reached him. I kept a copy, but I do not now remember just how it was worded."

"I left it with my mother," said Jasper; "but I remember it exactly. It was addressed to you, sir, and these were the words, in my father's handwriting:

"Send word to Jasper Hundley, care of Smithsonian Institute, that his father is a captive among the Yuaquiras Indians, far up the Yapura river. Well treated, but kept close."

"That was the message, and I sent it to Washington at once, and here you are. What puzzles me, my son, is the fact of your father's captivity. If the reason of that could be solved, I might have more confidence in your mission. If he had been killed, I would not have wondered, as some of the Indians in that region are said to be cannibals. In fact, several of our Brazilian tribes have that reputation; but it has never been proved against them, as far as I know. Why the Yuaquiras or any other Indians should hold your father as a prisoner passes my comprehension. Juan Ortiz, the man I am going to send with you, says that they have probably found a use for him."

"Is the guide a good man?" inquired Jasper. "You know that we will be almost entirely dependent upon him."

"Thoroughly reliable, and as brave as you could wish," replied the padre. "He has been among the Yuaquiras, and can speak their language, besides the dialects of several other tribes. You could not have a better man."

"Is he Portuguese?"

"No. He is a Spaniard, or at least a Cuban."

"I am glad of that, sir, as I understand Spanish."

"He can speak English pretty well, too. He has lived the life of a rover, and it would be hard to say where and what he has not been. I am expecting him every moment, and that may be his ring."

The bell at the convent door jingled, and the man of whom they had been speaking was announced, and ushered into the waiting-room.

Juan Ortiz was a man of forty, though his seamed and weather-beaten face made him look older, and was tall and well-built, with the appearance of possessing unusual strength. His face was nearly covered with a heavy, black beard, and under his shaggy eyebrows gleamed remarkably bright, black eyes. His black hair was worn long, and covered with a broad-brimmed hat of black leather. He wore heavy and high-topped boots, into which were stuffed his trousers of stout blue cotton, a short jacket, ornamented with round brass buttons, and a blue-flannel shirt. Over these garments was his poncho, a sort of striped blanket, with a hole for his head to go through.

A picturesque and rather brigandish-looking person.

He was cordially received by Padre Baranho, who introduced him to his young companion.

Jasper spoke to him in Spanish, and Juan Ortiz replied in the same language.

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Joe Baggs, opening

his mouth for the first time. "Do speak English, Jap. I want to hear what's goin' on, and am tired of so much furrin talk that I can't understand."

"You ought to want to learn it, Joe," replied Jasper.

The guide smiled pleasantly, and dropped into English, which he spoke with considerable fluency, but after a fashion that need not be reproduced here.

"I am very glad," he said, "to become acquainted with the young gentlemen whom I am to have the honor of conducting into our wonderful country."

"You are the right sort, I bet," remarked Joe, evidently pleased with the idea of being considered a young gentleman.

"It is a very wonderful country, is it not?" asked Jasper.

"Very wonderful. Even yet little is known of it; but that little is enough to wonder at for a lifetime."

"I suppose we will have a long journey, Senor Ortiz?"

"A very long journey."

"And difficult?"

"It will not be near as easy, I am afraid, as you may imagine."

"We won't care how hard it is," broke in Joe.

"We were cooped up so long on that steamship, that it will be nothing but fun for us to start out on our own hook."

"But it may be dangerous," suggested Jasper.

"Yes, it is dangerous," replied Ortiz. "But there is danger everywhere."

"Are those Yuaquiras Indians hostile?"

"They may be, and they may not. It is so long since I have been in that region, that I can not say how they might receive us now. There are hostile tribes along the Yapura—that is, Indians who hate white men; but they may not trouble us."

"If we find my father safe among the Yuaquiras, do you suppose we can get him away from there?"

"That is hard to say until we know why they are keeping him there. Perhaps you may be able to buy him."

"Yes, there may be a chance of that."

"Now, young gentlemen, I must say to you that time is passing. Your preparations must be made quickly. If the good padre will excuse us, I will go out in town with you, and we will see what remains to be done."

The next day a steamer was to leave Belem for the upper Amazon, stopping at the towns and villages on the way, and Jasper and Joe, with Juan Ortiz, were early on board.

Their only baggage was contained in three canoes of unusual style, which were safely stowed away on the steamer, and of which more will be heard hereafter.

Padre Baranho came down to bid them good-by and give them his parting blessing, and they set forth from the capital of Para in high spirits and full of hope.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST ADVENTURE.

THE steamer on which Jasper and Joe took passage was well provided with freight and passengers, and the latter were a motley crowd, which attracted the curious attention of the lads.

There were gentlemen and ladies dressed in the height of European fashion—that is, in what had been the fashion in Europe at some previous time. There were farmers and their wives and children, returning to their fazendas or plantations, all in garments that were awkwardly new. There were priests in long gowns and queer hats, returning to their charges or going on special missions. There were tourists of various nations, who had come to view the wonderful Amazon. There were traders of different races and complexions, who were going to purchase caoutchouc, sarsaparilla, dyewoods, turtle eggs and other numerous products of the fertile land and the prolific water. There were half-breeds of various grades, down to the despised mixture of white man, Indian and negro. There were full-blooded Indians, some of whom, though they had partially adopted a civilized garb, had not yet overcome the habit of wearing nose-rings and striping their faces.

Ortiz and his young companions did not mingle with the other passengers. Their stay on the steamer was not to be a long one, and they did not care to make acquaintances.

Indeed, the Americans were so occupied with admiring the wonders of the mighty Amazon that they had no need of any other society than their own.

Jasper Hundley, however, found time to converse freely with their guide, for the purpose of practicing his Spanish, and of consulting Ortiz concerning their expedition and its object.

At one of these conversations, in which Jasper went fully into the details of the disappearance of his father and possible plans for his release, they did not notice that a person was watching them and listening to them.

If they had noticed him, they would not have supposed that he could understand their talk—for the listener was an Indian.

Not a wild or naked Indian, but apparently one of the semi-civilized variety, dressed in cotton trousers and a sort of shirt-coat of cotton, resembling the costume of most of the Chinese in America. His face was of a light copper color, and his bushy hair was covered by a hat like that worn by Ortiz.

This Indian listened intently to the conversation between the young American and the guide, and there was an eager, malicious look on his face that foreboded danger for somebody.

However, as he went ashore before the steamer reached the Yapura river, it might reasonably be presumed that he had no sort of connection with those in whom he had seemed to take such a strange interest.

The Americans and their guide were landed near the mouth of the Yapura, and their three canoes were safely conveyed to the shore, fol-

lowed by the curious gaze of most of the remaining passengers.

They were indeed objects of curiosity, being quite unusual in style and build.

White cedar was the wood that had been mainly used in their construction, and their framework was ribs of tough oak. In shape they differed from ordinary canoes in being nearly flat-bottomed and as broad as they could be made to permit paddling. They were so built for the purpose of carrying freight, and were well-loaded with provisions, ammunition, changes of clothing, and a few cooking utensils and tools.

They were closely covered with waterproof canvas, somewhat like the Greenlander's *kajak*, or the shell boat of aquatic clubs, except at the seat of the paddler. At his side a repeating-rifle was securely placed, and behind him was strapped a blanket in a tight roll.

Everything in these canoes was snugly stowed, and required to be kept in the neatest order.

As for the canoeists, they were well equipped for the expedition. The lads were dressed in stout cotton trousers, tucked into high boots, flannel shirts, and rather long jackets of duck well provided with pockets. Their heads were protected by cork helmets, to which mosquito guards, which were carried on the inside of the crowns, could be easily attached.

Juan Ortiz was dressed in his usual garb, such as he wore when he met the Americans at the convent in Belem.

Each carried a belt of cartridges around his waist, a revolver in a sheath, and an American bowie as a hunting-knife.

Thus equipped, and each armed with a long two-bladed paddle, they entered their canoes and began their adventurous journey.

Dropping down the current of the Amazon, among numerous islands whose size and beauty excited their admiration, they paddled into the Bay of Arenapo, where the Yapura enters the mighty river through its eight mouths.

At first it was hard to realize the fact that they were not yet in the Amazon, as its great tributary did not seem to differ from it in breadth or volume, and they paddled their canoes through scenery similar to that which they had witnessed from the steamer.

But they were not able to go far or see much just then, as the day was nearly ended when they entered the bay.

So, after coasting along the east side until they found a suitable place for landing, they went ashore, and cooked and ate their supper.

At night, when "bedtime" had arrived, the two lads lay down upon the ground to sleep, protected by their blankets and mosquito guards, and further protected by Juan Ortiz, who was to keep watch over the camp until midnight.

It was long before sleep visited the eyes of the young fellows. The novelty of their situation, the strangeness of their surroundings, the constant and sometimes startling cries of innumerable night-birds, and the noise of frogs whose croak was a roar, to say nothing of the droning song of the plentiful mosquito, combined to keep them awake.

It seemed to Jasper that he had hardly got a snatch of sleep when he was aroused by the guide, although it was then two hours after midnight.

"Come, my friend," said Ortiz. "As this is to be a business with you, the sooner you get broken into it the better. In what we have to go through with, it will be necessary to be wide awake as soon as your eyes open."

"All right, Juan," replied Jasper, as he rubbed his eyes and opened them wide; but still he did not find it an easy matter to shake off the slumber that had fastened upon him.

He picked up his rifle, and prepared to stand his watch, while Ortiz, with a facility derived from long habit, seemed to drop to sleep immediately.

When he had once got fully awake the lad found no difficulty in keeping awake. The same causes that had prevented him from sleeping in the early part of the night kept his ears and eyes open, and his attention was continually attracted by the many sights and the ceaseless sounds that were so near to him.

His watch was uneventful until daybreak, which comes suddenly in those latitudes, the approach of day being but slightly heralded by the premonitory symptoms that attend it in more northern climes.

Perceiving that his companions were still sleeping well, he took a tin cup, and stepped toward the river to get a drink of water.

As he did so, a man who had been concealed in the abundant undergrowth of the forest glided out and followed him.

It was the Indian who had listened so intently to the conversation between Jasper and Ortiz.

He had not changed his garb since he left the steamer; but in his right hand he carried a manchetta, a sharp-bladed weapon, corresponding to the Mexican machete, which the dweller in those regions uses as a sword, a hunting-knife, and a tool for cutting his way through the tangled undergrowth.

He followed Jasper with the silence of a snake, his ruddy face darkened by a look of hatred.

As the lad approached the river the Indian was close behind him, and raised his manchetta to strike.

Just then the lad fancied that he heard a noise, and turned quickly.

Then came the blow.

The Indian thrust skillfully and with all his strength; but the blade struck against the lad's belt of cartridges, and did no injury beyond nearly taking his breath away and knocking him backward.

As Jasper stepped back he drew his revolver, at the same time shouting the names of Juan and Joe.

There was a puzzled look upon his face, as if he fancied that he had seen his antagonist before, or wondered what could be the cause of the attack.

By this time they had changed positions, the Indian being nearest the water, and he moved backward a little at the sight of Jasper's revolver, hesitating as if he doubted whether he should close in with his enemy or fly.

Juan Ortiz did not fail to practice his own precepts. He was wide awake as soon as his name was called, and the next instant was running toward the scene of conflict.

"A cayman!" he shouted as he came on. "A cayman!"

There was good cause for this outcry.

Up the river bank was advancing one of those gigantic alligators which are known on the Amazon as caymans, which lie in wait for prey at the mouths of holes, with their enormous jaws wide open. In the water they are remarkably swift and active, while on the land a man can scarcely run fast enough to get away from them.

Jasper saw the huge creature as it came up the bank with its great mouth stretched, and his face turned pale; but he did not take his eye off of his antagonist.

The Indian must have been aware, by the musky smell in the air, of the proximity of the rank-scented saurian monster, but it was the cry of Ortiz that startled him, and he turned to run.

As he did so, a running vine tripped him, and the Indian toppled over, backward, his head falling between the distended jaws of the cayman, which closed up on it instantly.

The next moment Ortiz had reached the monster, and his rifle was at his head.

He sent a bullet into its eye, and the huge reptile, after writhing and lashing its tail in a manner that drove everybody out of its reach, turned over on its side, and was dead.

CHAPTER III.

A TALE OF HID TREASURE.

THE immense saurian, though dead and harmless, was an unpleasant sight, and still more unpleasant was the headless corpse of the Indian, from whose trunk blood was still spouting.

"Who was this man, and why did he make such an attack?" demanded the guide.

As no one could answer him, he questioned Jasper closely, hoping to gain some hint from the details of the assault.

It was little that the lad was able to tell.

He could only say that as he was going to the river he had turned at a noise he thought he heard, and found himself confronted by his assailant, who thrust at him instantly.

Then they had faced each other, the one hesitating to shoot, and the other hesitating to attack, until the Indian fell into the jaws of the cayman.

Jasper showed his belt, where the manchetta had struck and marred two of the cartridges.

"It was a vicious blow, and he surely meant to kill you," said Ortiz. "But why should he attack you? He seemed to have been one of the half-civilized Indians, and they are all peaceable enough. If his motive was robbery, or if he merely wanted to kill somebody, why did he not pounce upon Joe and me as we lay sleeping there?"

"Perhaps he did not see you," suggested Jasper.

"No; he seems to have had a special spite against you."

"It seems to me," remarked Joe Baggs, "that he meant to rob the party and steal our canoes, and that he thought he would make a sure thing of Jap, so that he might have a better chance with us two."

"Whatever his purpose was," said the guide, "he has paid dearly for his attempt. He meant to be a murderer; but, my friends, we may at least give him a decent burial."

Jasper assented to this proposal, though Joe declared that they might as well pitch the body to the alligators.

"If one of you will bring me an enchada from my boat," continued Ortiz, "I will soon dig a grave."

An enchada is a steel tool in the shape of a hoe, with a stout wooden handle, and is a very useful article in the forests of Brazil.

Joe quickly brought one, and the guide proceeded to dig the grave.

When the hole was finished he looked at the headless corpse again.

"I would really like to know more about that fellow," said he, "and I believe I will search him, as it is possible that I may find in his clothes something to tell us who or what he was."

The lads were equally curious, and Ortiz proceeded to search the clothing of the dead Indian.

In the trowsers pockets nothing was found but a few sols and reis, small coins that circulate in the Brazilian provinces.

In one of the inner pockets of the shirt-coat was a quantity of tobacco, and from the other the guide drew a piece of folded paper.

A puzzled look came over his face as he opened it.

It was dingy and worn, and was covered with words and numerals in faded red ink.

"What is that, Juan?" inquired Jasper, as the guide put the paper in his own pocket.

"I do not know. I must examine it more carefully, and then, if I can make it out, I will tell you what it is."

The body of the Indian was soon properly buried, and the three returned to the spot where they had passed the night.

Ortiz seated himself at the foot of a tree, and opened the paper which he had taken from the dead Indian.

"If you will prepare our breakfast, my friends," said he, "I will try to study out this writing. It is necessary that you should learn how to take care of the camp, and I am inclined to believe that there is something of importance in this paper."

The two lads willingly set at work and did not make a bungling job of the breakfast as might have been expected. Joe Baggs, indeed, proved to be quite handy.

"I reckon I ought to know somethin' about this business," he remarked. "I have cooked on a flatboat in the Mississippi, and have picked up a few of the tricks of the trade."

Ortiz had not finished his task when breakfast was ready, and was silent and thoughtful during the meal.

When he had finished eating he lighted his pipe, which he relied upon to stimulate his brain, and again sat down under the tree to study the paper.

The lads loaded up the boats and made everything ready, and Jasper was anxious to start up the river.

"Wait a little while," said the guide. "I am getting hold of this now. I begin to see through it, and it is something that will surprise you."

His young companions restrained their curiosity and impatience, and waited quietly, until a cry from Ortiz told them that he had succeeded.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, starting up. "This paper is more precious than gold. It's worth more than a great deal of gold. It is as precious as diamonds."

"Diamonds!" exclaimed Jasper.

"Yes, it is all about diamonds."

"What is it, Juan? What does it say?"

"To explain it, my friends, I must first tell you a story. Sit down and listen to me."

A story was what they were ready enough to hear, and they listened eagerly.

"Of course you know," said the guide, "that a part of Brazil is very rich in diamonds. The mines are under the direction of the Government, and the capital of the diamond district is the town of Tijuco.

"A little over three years ago there was a robbery in the diamond arrayal. There was stolen from the office of the superintendent of mines a package of the precious stones, valued at many thousands of reals.

"Suspicion was fastened upon a porter in the office, formerly a slave, named Joacao, who disappeared when the theft of the jewels was discovered. His trail was found, and he was hotly pursued.

"When the pursuit was getting very close, doubtless fearing that he might be captured with the property in his possession, he concealed the package of diamonds in the forest, making a record on paper which, as he supposed, would enable no one but himself to find the spot where they were hid.

"During his flight he lost that paper, and shortly after its loss he was captured and taken to Manaos on the Amazon. Severe measures were used, I believe, to induce him to confess, and he did confess.

"On the condition that his life should be spared he agreed to accompany the officers into the interior and restore the diamonds, and a party set out for that purpose; but on the way Joacao was bitten by a rattlesnake, and he soon died.

"Before his death he was only able to tell the officers that the treasure was buried on the bank of the Yapura, not far from the village of the Yuaquiras, and near a gigantic sapucaia tree, which was sure to be a conspicuous object in the forest. As for the measurements by which the exact locality was to be determined, he had committed them to the paper which he lost, and had forgotten them.

"This left the authorities what you call in America, a blind trail; but they followed it well as they could, to no purposes. Agents were sent into the country of the Yuaquiras, and careful

searches were made, and much digging was done; but nothing came of it.

"There the matter rested, and the diamonds have been given up as lost beyond recovery, although a large reward has been offered for them."

"Is that paper, then, the record which the thief lost?" demanded Jasper, as the guide brought his narrative to an end.

"I believe it is. It is written in Portuguese, and the grammar and spelling are bad, such as might have been expected from the porter Joacao; but there are measurements here, and they start from a large sapucaia."

"This is good luck, Senor Ortiz. I wonder how that Indian happened to be in possession of the paper."

"I suppose he found it, or some other Indian picked it up and intrusted it to him as a trader, to learn what it meant. He may have got an idea of its value in Belem, and perhaps he was on the steamer.

"That's it!" exclaimed Jasper. "I was sure that I had seen him somewhere, and now I remember that there was just such an Indian hanging around us on the steamer."

"That accounts, then, for his attack this morning. He understood that we were going into the company of the Yuaquiras, and may have supposed that we were going to search for those diamonds."

"I am not so sure of that, Juan. Even if he did suppose us to be an opposition party—and I am sure that we said nothing to make him think so—that would hardly make him run such a risk as he did run in pitching into us. As he was the only one who had the measurements, his chance was greatly the best."

"Well, he is dead, and we have the paper; so we need not argue the point."

"That's so!" exclaimed Joe Baggs. "It is big luck for us, anyhow. If we can find those diamonds, and bring away Jap's father, we will have somethin' to brag of when we get home."

"To do that we must go up the river," said Jasper, "and we need not wait here any longer."

CHAPTER IV.

CHASING THE MANATEE.

As the little fleet of canoes glided up the broad and beautiful river, the navigators were in high spirits, anticipating a grand time on the voyage and a successful termination of their journey.

"Now for a race, Jap!" cried Joe Baggs, as he made a spurt with his paddle. "Let us see which can reach that island first."

"Not yet," replied Jasper. "We have got to get used to these canoes, and must break ourselves into the work gradually. It won't pay to tire ourselves out at the start. I suppose you know more about canoeing than I do, Joe."

"I don't see why I should. I have pulled skiffs on the Mississippi, but never tried to manage such a craft as this before."

The canoes were not difficult to manage. Ortiz was an expert at propelling them, having

had much experience with pirogues and the like. Under his instructions, and with their constant practice, the lads soon became good paddlers, and as they got used to the work, and their muscles grew hardened to it, they found canoe navigation a very pleasant mode of traveling.

As the guide was well acquainted with the Amazon and many of the rivers that flow into it, he made the voyage much easier for them than it would otherwise have been, by guiding the fleet where the current was the lightest and where eddies near the bank often gave the water a set up-stream for a considerable distance.

So they canoed it on and up the river, never tiring of the grandeur and beauty of its scenery, with its islands, stationary and floating, and the enormous trees and abundant foliage that lined its banks.

"I thought the old Mississippi was the biggest thing out," said Joe; "but it ain't a circumstance to this river."

"And yet this is not the Amazon," rejoined Ortiz.

The air was not uncomfortably hot, the heat being tempered by cooling breezes that blew up and down the river, and when they wished to rest or eat their meals or pass the night, they had only to land and moor their canoes and stretch their legs in the shade of the primeval forest.

On the third day out the voyagers began to desire a change of diet. They had been feeding thus far on little besides the provisions, mostly canned, which they had brought from Belem, not stopping to hunt on the land, or even to shoot any of the wild fowl that so frequently flew in flocks over the river.

Although they were well supplied with ammunition, Ortiz was of the opinion that they ought not to expend it unnecessarily, as there was no telling what circumstances might arise to compel them to use it freely for the protection of their lives.

As they had excellent appetites, they made great havoc with the contents of their larder; but the lads clamored for something fresh, and toward the close of the day the guide decided that they should take some fish.

Nothing was easier, as the river was full of fish, and they had plenty of hooks and lines.

They went ashore for bait, which Ortiz showed them how to procure, and then anchored their canoes at a little distance from the bank, and threw out their lines.

Jasper and Joe were excited and overjoyed. They had never seen such fishing. It was the fisherman's paradise that they had reached.

"These fish would bite at a bare hook," said Jasper.

So it seemed. It was no trouble at all to take them, and their variety was something astonishing.

But such a small party did not require a great load of fish, and the guide directed his companions to throw away all but the gamitanas, which were the best for eating.

After each of the lads had been painfully pricked by some handsome specimens of sting rays that persisted in getting caught, they were

willing to quit fishing, and the canoes were turned toward the shore.

"What a funny alligator!" exclaimed Joe, pointing with his paddle at a highly ornamental river monster that was swimming near his canoe.

"That is no alligator," replied Ortiz. "It is a real fish, and a harmless one, big as it is, called the piracura. We are not likely to see any caymans in this water."

They had hardly landed when Ortiz saw something that excited him.

"There is game that is worth getting!" he exclaimed.

The lads looked where he pointed, but saw nothing except three small and dark objects on the surface of the water, a little distance below their landing-place. But these objects were slowly moving up-stream, though their motion might have been caused by an eddy.

"What do you mean?" demanded Jasper.

"It is a manatee. I had not expected to see one about here; but I suppose the hunters have driven it up."

"I have heard of manatees," said Jasper. "There are plenty of them in Florida, and they are called sea-cows. Are they not dangerous?"

"You shall soon see, if we have luck. Hark! There he snorts!"

Just then the creature "blowed," somewhat in the style of the whale, getting rid of the air which it had used under the water.

"If our canoes were open," said Ortiz, "so that one could sit in the stern and the other in the bow, we would have a better chance to chase the manatee. But perhaps we can manage it."

The guide had a boat-hook with a long handle, and with a long and sharp point below the hood, which was strapped on his canoe. This he proposed to use as a harpoon.

He directed Jasper to take his seat in his own canoe with his paddle, and placed himself so that he could stand between the lad's legs, to use his harpoon and control the course of the canoe.

Then Jasper paddled slowly and softly toward the manatee, while Joe stood on the bank and eagerly watched the maneuvers of his friends.

As the canoe approached the game, the monster sunk out of sight.

"A little further," ordered Ortiz. "That will do now. Stop pulling and watch for him. When he rises, send the canoe toward him."

After a while the creature came up to blow.

Jasper's quick eyes caught sight of him, and with two strokes of the paddle he sent the canoe ahead.

Ortiz darted his boat-hook with good aim before the animal could sink again, and struck him fairly on the back.

The lads expected that the manatee would make fight, or at least that it would struggle for its life; but it did nothing of the kind.

It seemed to be stunned by the blow of the boat-hook, and was easily towed ashore and dispatched. It was about four feet in length, and an ugly animal to look at; but Ortiz was highly pleased by its capture, and said that it was a great prize.

"This is the hog of the water," said he, "and its flesh is better to eat than any pork. We will have some of it for breakfast."

Directing the lads to gather wood and build a fire, he proceeded to dress and cut up the manatee.

He procured from the carcass a large quantity of fat, excellent for frying and other cooking purposes, which was tried out over the fire, and all the empty cans they had were filled with it.

Enough of the meat was cut off for breakfast, and the rest was cut into strips and hung upon poles supported by crotched sticks, under which a heavy smoke was started to serve the double purpose of curing the meat and worrying the mosquitoes.

Before Juan finished his task the boys had cleaned and cooked the fish, and they made a hearty supper of the gamitanas, which they pronounced delicious.

A big smoke was kept up under the manatee meat during the night, and in the morning the party feasted upon the flesh of that curious creature, which, although it lives in the water, is a herbivorous cetacean, feeding upon aquatic plants.

CHAPTER V.

JOE AND THE ELECTRIC EEL.

AFTER breakfast Juan Ortiz examined the smoked manatee meat and pronounced it partially cured.

"We will take it with us," he said, "and tomorrow night and the next will smoke it some more, and thus we shall save time."

He went into the forest to seek some large leaves to wrap the meat in, and while he was away Joe Baggs was seized by a consuming desire for a swim.

"You had better not try it," remarked Jasper. "We don't know much about this river yet, and there's no telling what danger may be in the water."

"Oh, bother! What sort of danger can there be here more than in the Mississippi?"

"Have you forgotten the cayman that gobbled up the Indian who tried to kill me?"

"Juan says that there ain't any caymans about here. You heard him say so yesterday."

"He wasn't sure, Joe. He only said that we are not likely to find them here."

"I don't care, Jap. I am going in, anyhow."

As Joe Baggs usually acted on his impulses, he quickly stripped off and plunged into the tawny waters of the Yapura.

"It is just splendid, Jap!" he exclaimed, as he struck boldly out toward the channel. "The water is just right. Come in and try it."

But Jasper Hundley shook his head, and it was not long before he had reason to be thankful that his prudence had restrained him.

Joe enjoyed himself greatly in the water, swimming, diving, floating, and showing off his skill for the benefit of his friend, until Juan was seen emerging from the depths of the forest with his arms full of immense leaves.

"Better come out, Joe," said Jasper. "Juan is coming, and he may give you a setting down. He is the boss of this party, you know."

"All right, Jap. I am coming. See! I can

touch bottom out here, but the bottom is awful muddy."

As the boy finished speaking he uttered a piercing cry, and struck out for the shore.

The next moment another cry of anguish escaped him, and he threw up his hands.

At the first cry Jasper had rushed down to his canoe, and the second cry quickened his motions.

"Juan! Juan!" he shouted at the top of his voice, as he cast off the rope that held the canoe to the bank.

He jumped in, and paddled with all his strength toward his friend, wondering what could be the matter, as he was sure that a cayman would have made an end of the boy in a moment.

Joe was struggling and screaming; but his efforts were growing weaker, and his voice fainter.

As Jasper faced him, urging the canoe toward him as rapidly as possible, he seemed to be fighting some invisible enemy.

Every now and then he sunk beneath the surface, and when he rose he appeared to be nearly exhausted.

His struggles and cries had ceased when the canoe reached him. He seemed to have sunk for the last time, and only one hand was visible above the water.

Jasper grasped at that hand, seized it, pulled his friend's head out of the water, and then got hold of him under the arms.

As he bent over to do so he caught sight of the thing that Joe had been fighting.

It was a long, black creature, like a large eel or water snake, which appeared to coil itself up, and then to lash out like a whip, striking the unprotected legs of the boy, and following him up as he was drawn to the surface.

Exerting all his strength, Jasper quickly pulled his friend out of the water and across his knees, where he lay as limp as a rag, and then paddled back to the shore as swiftly as possible.

Juan Ortiz, who had thrown down his load of leaves, was at the bank to receive them, and he took the insensible form of Joe, from the canoe, and laid him on the bank.

"What was the matter?" he asked.

Jasper briefly described what he had seen.

"Ah!" was all Ortiz said.

He got from his canoe a jug of tafia, or native brandy, with which he rubbed the boy's limbs and body briskly, pouring some of the strong liquor down his throat.

Joe soon revived; but it was some time before he gained strength enough to stand and walk.

"I think I know what it was that worried him," said Jasper. "It must have been a gymnotus, or electric eel. I have read of such things, and I believe there are many of them in these waters."

"That is what it was," replied Ortiz. "We call it the puraque, and some of those eels grow to an enormous size. It must have been a small one that attacked Joe, or he might not have escaped with his life, though you were so quick to go to his help."

"What do they do to a fellow?" asked Joe.

"The puraque is a perfect battery of electricity."

"I believe that, as it nearly battered the life out of me."

"It lies in a coil in the mud when it is not swimming, and if you stir it up it uncoils and strikes you like the lash of a big whip, discharging its electricity into your body. The discharges grow stronger as it gets angry, and unless you can escape from it you will soon be paralyzed."

"How did it seem to you, Joe?" inquired Jasper.

"Well, I was walkin' in the mud out there, when I stepped on somethin' slimy that slipped out from under my foot, and then the cussed thing began on me. I was never struck by lightnin', but must have felt pretty much that way just then. The more I tried to get away from the confounded crittur, the more it pitched into me, and it hurt—oh, ginger! how it did hurt! In less than no time I couldn't use my legs a bit, and then I got numb all over, and I reckon I must have been nigh a gone coon when Jap came and pulled me out."

"I suppose you won't care to go swimming again very soon."

"You may bet high on that. You couldn't drive me into that water with a club. I know when I've got enough."

As soon as the manatee meat was packed and loaded, the voyagers started up the river, Joe Baggs having fully recovered from the attack of the puragues.

Thus far they had seen no Indians, except a few about the villages of half-civilized or inoffensive aborigines, the remnants of once powerful tribes; but on the second day after Joe's adventure, a number of natives were descried on a point where the river made an abrupt bend toward the west.

There were quite a party of them—at least fifty—and Jasper Hundley unslung his field-glass, and examined them closely.

They were men of fair size, and all of them were quite naked with the exception of a cotton cloth about the loins. In color they were a light copper, and their faces were painted somewhat in the style of the plains Indians of North America.

Apparently they had no weapons; but most of them carried light canes, with which they gesticulated as they pointed at the approaching canoes.

"There are some sure enough Injuns at last," said Joe. "Suppose we run in and take a look at them."

"Perhaps it may not be safe," replied the prudent Jasper. "What do you say, Juan?"

"I say that we had better keep away from them."

"I don't see anything to be afraid of," insisted Joe. "They hain't got any more weapons than they've got clothes—not even bows and arrers."

"You should not be too sure of that, my young friend. They are only a little less naked than the puraque, and you might have thought that he could not fight; yet he came near putting you out of this world."

"Are those Indians like snakes, then?" asked Jasper. "Or are they like electric eels?"

"Somewhat like both. They are as quick as the puraque, and as poisonous as the most deadly snake. Do you see what they have in their hands?"

"Nothin' but sticks," replied Joe.

"Those are their blow-pipes."

"Blow pipes be blowed! What can they do with 'em?"

"The blow-pipes are nothing but reeds; but they shoot arrows through them. The arrows are little things; but they have sharp points that have been dipped in a deadly poison called curare."

"I have read of that," said Jasper. "What is it made of?"

"That is more than I can tell you. I believe that no white man has ever been able to learn the exact ingredients; but the poison is sure death."

"How does it work?"

"If one of those arrows should touch you, you would feel numb all over, pretty much as Joe felt after the puraque attacked him."

"If you wanted to move a foot or a hand, you could not do so. You would be quite helpless, and soon you would die, and all the physicians in the world could not save you."

"But we could keep at a good distance from them, if they were hostile, and pick them off with our rifles."

"You might make a mistake in choosing your distance. They can send those arrows further than you would suppose. They have not much bravery to boast of, but are treacherous, and it is best to keep out of their way."

By Juan's direction the signs which the Indians made were not answered, and they followed the canoes around the bend and for quite a distance up the river.

"They meant harm, or they would not have followed us," said the guide. "Our canoes and their contents would be quite a prize to them."

"If the Indians down here are so dangerous," remarked Jasper, "how will we get on with the Yuaquiras?"

"They are a different people; more powerful, and therefore more manly; more independent, and therefore less treacherous."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TURTLE HARVEST.

A FEW nights after Joe's adventure with the eel the canoes were brought to land on the right bank of the river, just below a large sandy beach, which extended well out into the water, and reached for a considerable distance up and down stream.

As the voyagers were preparing to stretch themselves out on their blankets for a night's rest, a strange noise was heard, something like the breaking of surf on a distant shore.

The boys listened to it in wondering silence, and the usually calm face of Ortiz showed no little excitement.

"What is it?" inquired Jasper.

"Meat and butter for us," replied the guide.

"Meat and butter? What do you mean?"

"I mean that we are in luck. That noise is

caused by turtles—a great many turtles—that have come up on the beach to lay their eggs in the sand. If we go down there early in the morning, before the Indians come to gather the harvest, we can get plenty of eggs, and perhaps a quantity of young turtles.”

“How will the Indians know about it?” demanded Joe.

The turtles have pretty regular seasons for attending to that business, and the Indians always watch them closely, as the egg-laying never fails to give them a feast. We happened to land here just in the nick of time, and we will have the first chance at the delicacies.”

Jasper said that he would like to see the turtles at their work.

“Follow me, then; but you must do just as I do, and must be as silent as possible.”

Ortiz led the way toward the river.

Before he had gone far he sunk down upon the ground and crept forward noiselessly.

The boys followed his example, and soon found themselves at the edge of the bank, from which they looked down upon the beach below.

It was literally black with turtles. There seemed to be thousands of them, and by the faint light of the young moon the beach looked like an ant-hill about which myriads of enormous ants were swarming.

They carried on their work systematically, and in regular order, as if their movements were directed by a chief.

First they dug a wide and deep trench in the sand with their hind flippers, in which they proceeded to deposit their eggs at their leisure.

When this operation was completed, they filled the trench with sand, each turtle covering its own eggs, and beating down the sand quite solidly. Then they left the beach in a body, as they had come.

Before this work was finished Ortiz had led his young friends back to the camp and to their blankets, where he told them to sleep soundly, as they would be obliged to stir out at an early hour in the morning.

“If we had wanted turtle-meat,” he said, “we might have gone down on the beach and turned one or two of those big fellows. But we would not know what to do with them if we had them, and we will find plenty of young ones in the morning if we have luck.”

“What hatches the eggs?” asked Joe.

“The heat of the sand, to which the sun is constantly adding. Those that are laid to-night will be hatched in about two months.”

Before daybreak the lads were aroused, and the first thing they did, under the directions of the guide, was to make the canoes ready for an immediate start, in case of the appearance of Indians.

“The Indians about here may be quite peaceable,” said Ortiz. “I know nothing against them; but they consider the turtle beaches their own property, and they might prove to be ugly. As we expect to be back this way before long, it is best to run no risk of getting into trouble with them.”

Breakfast was postponed until a more convenient time, and the party hastened to gather the turtle harvest.

It was easy to see where the turtles had laid

their eggs, as a little mound of sand covered each deposit, and of these mounds there was a great number.

Under each mound about two hundred eggs could be found by a little digging, and Ortiz attended to this part of the business, leaving the boys to gather the newly-hatched turtles, which were running over the beach in multitudes.

This was a task in which they delighted, and they had fine sport chasing and catching the lively little amphibians and stowing them in the canoes.

Day was breaking when they had collected as many of the eggs and young turtles as they could possibly use, and they entered their canoes and paddled out into the stream, congratulating themselves on having finished their work without any sort of interruption.

When they got a good distance away from the shore their ears were saluted by the sound of an Indian drum, followed by a Babel of discordant noises which civilized men could not recognize as singing.

“There are the Indians!” exclaimed Ortiz. “We were just in time to miss them.”

In a few moments a large party of natives emerged from the forest, and flocked down upon the beach.

They appeared to be highly excited, and gesticulated in a lively manner as they pointed at the white men on the river. But their interest in the strangers did not hinder them from proceeding rapidly with the work of gathering the eggs and young turtles, and the monotonous pounding of the drum and the discordant cries were kept up.

The voyagers watched them curiously for awhile, and then vigorously paddled their canoes up the river.

At the distance of a few miles above the beach they landed for breakfast, which was quite a feast.

The little soft-shell turtles, fried in the lard of the manatee, were tender and delicious, and the lads enjoyed them hugely.

“The meat is all right, Juan,” remarked Jasper. “The baby turtles are better than oysters, and far ahead of soft-shell crabs. But where is the butter you spoke of?”

“The eggs of the turtles are made into butter of the very best quality,” replied the guide. “I will make some shortly, and you will pronounce it as good as you ever tasted.”

The night of the same day witnessed a strange and unpleasant adventure, which came near having serious results for one of the lads.

As their breakfast was late, the voyagers allowed their usual dinner hour to pass without landing, and in the evening, combining dinner with supper, they made an unusually hearty meal.

It was Jasper Hundley's turn to stand the first watch, and his companions were soon asleep.

The soft luster of the young moon, the shining surface of the placid river, the somber depths of the primeval forest, the whirring of the wings of enormous bats, the varied noises of night birds, and insects, and amphibians, and other innumerable sounds that came with darkness, combined to oppress the lad with a feeling

of loneliness which was not relieved by the sight of the silent forms of his sleeping comrades.

The present became like a dream to him, and he grew drowsy.

He sought to quicken his faculties by fixing his thoughts on the end of the journey, on finding his father, and rescuing him from the Indians who held him in captivity, and on his joyful return to his native land.

Still he was drowsy, and the smoked manatee meat of which he had eaten heavily made him thirsty.

Accidentally he broke off the top of a large plant, somewhat like the bell cactus, and saw that it was filled with water.

This water tempted him so that he tasted it, finding it fresh, cool, and a little sweet.

Eagerly he drank all the liquid contained in the cup.

His drowsiness increased, and it grew upon him until he could scarcely keep his eyes open.

He sat down on the soft turf at the foot of a tree, but not with any thought of sleeping. That was far from his intention. He meant to stand his watch, as a matter of course, and to protect his sleeping friends. But he was tired, or fancied that he was, and merely wished to rest his limbs for a few minutes.

In spite of his good intentions he fell asleep, and his sleep was soon so profound and dreamless that he was unconscious of anything.

Although his face was entirely unprotected, he was not annoyed by mosquitoes. Those pests of the Amazon basin avoided him, and confined their attention to his companions, whose masks they vainly endeavored to penetrate.

A gentle breeze fanned his cheeks, cooling him nicely, and lulling him to sleep.

There could not be a deeper or sweeter slumber.

Suddenly he was aroused by a harsh cry from Ortiz, who rushed toward him.

As he awoke he faintly heard the flapping of heavy wings, and a dark object rose from him and sailed away toward the river.

Although awake, Jasper was still stupefied, and found himself prostrated by a strange sense of weakness, from which he only partially recovered when the guide shook him soundly and poured some liquor down his throat from a flask of tafia.

"What is it? What has happened to Jap?" eagerly demanded Joe.

"A vampire bat," replied Ortiz.

At the name of that dreaded creature Jasper started up, and it was more effective than the tafia had been in fully arousing him.

"A vampire!" he exclaimed. "Are there really such things? I have heard of them, but never believed in them."

"There was really such a thing that settled on you, my friend, and it was lucky for you that I chanced to wake."

"Has it been sucking me?"

The guide examined the lad's neck, and discovered a small puncture, like the prick of a pin, just back of his ear.

"Of course it has been sucking you," replied

Ortiz, "and it has carried away no small quantity of the blood that is your life."

"But I felt no bite. I never slept better."

"The vampire never hurts. He has practiced the act of sucking the blood of cattle and other sleeping animals, until he has become perfect. He does his work very quietly, and while he is drawing your blood he fans you with his big wings, so that nothing shall disturb your slumbers. How was it that you happened to fall asleep?"

Jasper related the events of his watch as far as he remembered them.

He pointed out the plant from which he had drunk the water, and Ortiz examined it.

"The juice of that plant is not poisonous," said the guide; "but it is not fit to drink, as it has something of the quality of opium, and the drink you took made you get more sleepy. You should not taste anything in these forests without asking me about it."

Jasper declared that nothing would induce him to do so again.

"I am even with you now, Jap," remarked Joe. "Your bat was as bad as my electric eel."

The boys laid down to sleep, and Juan kept watch during the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER VII.

-A DAY'S HUNTING.

WHEN the voyagers had been more than three weeks out in their canoes, and were supposed to be approaching the end of their journey, Ortiz yielded to a request which Jasper and Joe had frequently made, and consented that they should "take a day off" for recreation and a grand hunt.

It could not be denied that something of the kind was needed, and that it would be beneficial to the entire party.

Continual paddling became monotonous and wearisome; the limbs of the canoeists became cramped because of the confined position they were compelled to maintain, and their muscles suffered under the sameness of the strain upon them. The halts that were made for meals and for sleeping purposes were not enough to overcome these inconveniences, and they felt the need of exercise that would arouse other activities and call into play different sets of muscles.

They proposed to rest themselves in the Yankee fashion by "changing works."

After a good night's rest, they ate a hearty breakfast and were ready for the business of the day.

"This is a splendid place for a hunt, my friends," said the guide. "I doubt if you could find a richer hunting-ground than this point of land in all the immense forest. Here we can see the greatest abundance of game, from the great bald-eagle to the humming-bird, from the ounce to the smallest midget of a monkey."

"And what is an ounce?" demanded Joe.

"A rather large and dangerous animal. A leopard is an ounce, and so is a jaguar, and there are several varieties of that species of tiger-cat, all of which we call ounces."

"A leopard?" exclaimed Joe. "I've seen those critturs in the menageries, and I should

say that a leopard is something more than an ounce—a pound or two, anyhow."

"What is that he says?" asked the guide.

Jasper explained his friend's joke as well as he could.

"He is right," said Ortiz. "The leopard of Brazil is not as terrible as the tiger of India, but is dangerous enough. He is pretty to look at, but is not a nice plaything. However, as we have good rifles, and know how to use them, I think we need not fear the leopards or the jaguars or the panthers."

Before starting, the voyagers dropped their canoes a little way down the river to a place where the bank was low and concealed them under the overhanging foliage.

While the sun was yet low in the eastern sky they set out, keen for the hunt, and eager to explore the wonders of a Brazilian forest.

Juan was an excellent shot and an experienced hunter. The boys had had considerable practice with the rifles they carried, but were as yet unused to such hunting as that region afforded.

As the guide had promised, they found game in great abundance. Even at the river bank it was plentiful, such as it was, and Joe could hardly be restrained from shooting at everything that came in sight. Jasper was more steady and prudent, and was easily persuaded to save his ammunition for something that would be worth carrying to the canoes.

The monkeys were simply innumerable. From the fierce mucura, a sort of gorilla ape to which it is well to give a wide berth, down to the curious sapajou which is found in so many collections in the States, there was no end of them, and it would have been no small affair even to enumerate the varieties. Big monkeys and little monkeys; long tailed monkeys and short-tailed monkeys; monkeys that walked erect, and monkeys that went upon four hands; monkeys with horns like pictures of Satan, and monkeys with funny masks upon their faces; there was no counting them, and no describing them.

With a curiosity that so strongly distinguishes their tribe, they flocked around the hunters from the start and followed them as they penetrated the depths of the forest, their numbers constantly increasing.

They leaped from tree to tree, running up the trunks and large boughs with astonishing agility, and swinging by their tails from the loftiest limbs, all the while keeping up a tremendous chattering and barking and howling.

Joe Boggs went into ecstasies over the monkeys, and declared that the sight was worth a hundred monkey menageries rolled into one.

"If we were hungry," said Ortiz, "we might easily knock over one of those fellows, and have a fine roast for dinner."

"What! eat a monkey?" exclaimed Joe, who was quite disgusted at the thought.

"Yes, indeed. The Indians are very fond of them."

"Well, I ain't Injun enough for that, and hope I never will be."

Even the monkeys were greatly surpassed in

number and variety by the feathered tribes that filled the forest.

They were of so many shapes and sizes and colors and mixtures of colors. Birds that are regarded as great curiosities at the North were there in lavish abundance, their brilliant plumage undimmed by cage confinement. Countless numbers of almost countless species flew in flocks above the heads of the hunters, and kept up such a continual screaming and screeching and hooting and whistling and chirping as almost overcame the incessant voice of the monkeys.

"What a pleasure these forests must have been to my father!" exclaimed Jasper. "What a pile of specimens he would have taken home, if those Indians had let him alone!"

As for the wonderful trees, and the immense vines, and the endless masses of foliage, and the millions of strange and beautiful blossoms, those were almost beyond talking about, and the boys could only stare at them in silent admiration.

Now and then the well known noise of a rattlesnake warned them to look to their footsteps, as they were treading on dangerous ground, and more than once Jasper started back as he came upon a horned toad, which, though harmless, is surely one of the ugliest objects in existence.

"Hi, there!" shouted Joe. "Ain't that an ostrich? Yes, there's two of 'em, by gum!"

He pointed toward an open space in the forest, into which stepped in stately style two large birds, nearly as tall as Joe was, accompanied by a smaller bird that looked somewhat like a turkey.

"Yes, they are ostriches, but of little value," said Ortiz. "The bird you see with them is a seriema. Wherever you see an ostrich you see a seriema. It is good to eat, too; but we will find something better. We ought not to shoot anything but what we need, and we will easily find as much game as we will care to carry to the canoes."

They had gone but a little further when the guide disregarded his own instruction in the most reprehensible manner.

"Look there!" he exclaimed. "There is something, now. That is what you do not see every day, even in these forests."

"Is it a dog?" asked Jasper. "That is nothing very strange."

"It is not a dog. See where it is, and what it is doing."

The creature did look, from that distance, like a large Newfoundland dog, and it was standing over a big ant-hill, the interior of which it appeared to be rummaging.

"What is it, then?" demanded Joe.

"It is a great ant-eater—the lion ant-eater—a rare specimen. If you want to shoot it, step softly to the big tree yonder, and be sure that you aim well and fire together."

The boys, glad that they were at last allowed to shoot something, soon reached the tree, followed closely by the guide. The ant eater was too busy to be disturbed by their approach.

Resting their rifles against the giant trunk.

they took a careful aim, and Jasper gave the word.

The two rifles cracked nearly together, and the creature tumbled over, but rose immediately, assuming a posture of defiance.

Again the rifles cracked, and again the ant-eater rolled over, tearing the ground as he writhed in convulsions.

"Don't touch him!" shouted Ortiz, as the boys ran toward their struggling prey.

He sent a bullet into the creature's head; but not until there could be no doubt of his death did he dare to lift him by his long tail and show his sharp nose and his formidable paws.

"If he had got hold of you while he was alive," said the guide, "you would have learned that his grip is something dreadful."

"Is he good to eat?" asked Jasper.

"No, indeed."

"You told us, Juan, that we must shoot nothing that is not good to eat."

"This is a great ant-eater, and a splendid specimen."

"But we are not looking for specimens, and are not able to prepare them and carry them away. You broke your own rule, Juan, and that is all there is about it."

"I confess my fault; but the ant-eater was a great temptation," laughingly replied the guide. "If you want to shoot something that is good to eat, you have a fine chance now. There come two turkeys."

It was, indeed, a pair of turkeys that came stalking toward them in the shade of the tall trees, and fine birds they were with their plumage of brown and white.

"The game is yours, my friends, and our dinner depends upon your skill," said Ortiz.

Though the lads were highly excited, they approached the birds carefully until they were within easy gunshot.

Jasper fired first, and missed the hen, which flew away; but Joe brought down the "gobbler," and was very proud of his feat.

As it was then near noon, a fire was built, and the bird was soon cleaned and cut up, and Juan showed the boys how to cook it on sticks of the iron-wood, which is nearly as hard as the metal from which it takes its name.

They made a splendid dinner, in spite of the lack of knives and forks, and for dessert they had quite a feast of bananas.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BATTLE ROYAL.

AFTER they had finished their dinner the hunters went but a little further into the forest, as their progress in that direction was stopped by an almost impenetrable jungle.

"I can cut a way through for us," said Ortiz, who had brought the manchetta which had been taken from the Indian who attacked Jasper at the mouth of the river, and which he had frequently found very useful.

"It wouldn't be worth while," remarked Joe. "We can find plenty of game without pitching into that, and it looks as if it might be too healthy a place for snakes."

Jasper was of the same opinion, and it was

unanimously decided that they had better turn back and make their way toward the river.

But there was something in the jungle that became intensely interesting before they finally got away from it.

At a little distance in the thicket was an open space, a sort of circular glade, sloping downward toward the center, where was a small pool of water which was then nearly dry.

Jasper first noticed the glade, and called the attention of his companions to it, wondering why that space should be clear of trees and vines and all manner of vegetable growth.

They looked at it, and were commenting upon it, when they heard a sound as of some animal breaking its way through the thicket.

"Hush!" whispered the guide. "We may see something shortly that is worth seeing."

What they saw was indeed worth looking at.

From the jungle on the other side of the open space emerged a beautiful leopard.

As he stepped out, he halted, and looked warily about: exposing the full beauty of his graceful form, his tawny hide, his handsome head, and his flashing eyes.

The heat and his recent efforts caused him to pant, and his red tongue hung out of his mouth like a flag of battle, and his sharp white teeth showed plainly.

He stepped down to the remains of the pool, and lapped in the dark water, not forgetting to keep up his wary watch for possible danger.

"What a splendid fellow!" whispered Jasper. "Shall we shoot him?"

"No," replied the guide; "not yet, at least. I think I hear another coming."

Sure enough there was the same noise in the jungle that had been heard a few minutes previously, and the leopard at the pool looked up quickly, stepped back, and faced the direction from whence the sound came.

Then the other appeared.

It was a leopard exactly like the first arrival, and similar in manner and actions.

"They are not mates," whispered Ortiz. "We may have a fight soon."

The second leopard stepped down to the pool and lapped in the water as the first had done. Then he stepped back, and the two fierce beasts faced each other, lashing their tails and swaying their sinuous bodies from side to side.

They seemed to be working themselves up to the proper pitch of fury, and it was evident that a battle royal was to be expected.

The boys almost held their breath while these preparations for the fight were going on, and even the guide was intensely excited by the scene.

When the crisis came, it was as much of a shock as if it had not been so anxiously looked for.

The first arrival, who may have thought that he had the better title to the spot by right of pre-emption, was the first to crouch and spring; but the other was hardly a second behind him, and they met in the air, falling heavily to the ground, where they fought with the greatest ferocity.

Blood flowed freely as they bit and clawed, and crimson stains soon appeared upon their tawny hides.

Over and over they rolled, one scarcely to be distinguished from the other as they writhed and tumbled about. They fought down to the edge of the pool and into the dark water, from which they emerged dripping and coated with slime and mud.

They were too much occupied with their own affairs to notice anything else, and the hunters talked as they pleased without fearing to disturb them.

"This is the best show I ever struck," remarked Joe. "It is by long odds the cheapest, too."

"It must be nearly played out," said Jasper. "I think they have both had about as much as they can stand."

One of them had clearly got enough. He was stretched out on the ground, as the other rose from his prostrate form, and blood was pouring from a great gash in his throat.

The other seemed to be not much better off as he staggered away, apparently looking for some shady place where he could rest and lick his wounds.

"Shall we shoot him?" impatiently demanded Jasper.

"Yes," replied Ortiz; and the lads fired nearly together.

Two bullets struck the exhausted beast, and he turned with a howl and looked for his new adversaries, feebly swinging his tail.

Two more bullets struck him, and he sunk upon the sand and quietly breathed his last.

The monkeys, which had been frightened away by the deadly combat, came stealing back among the tops of the trees, and chattered as they looked down on the fallen monarchs of the forest.

"They are both dead," said Jasper. "I would dearly love to have their hides."

"It would never pay to cut our way through for those," observed Joe. "They are too nasty."

"They are too badly cut up," said Juan. "Besides, we have no way of curing them, and could do nothing with them. When we come back down the river, if we have good luck, we may get something that it will be worth your while to carry home."

They left the dead leopards to the birds of prey, and started back toward the river, taking a route a little different from that by which they had come.

Shortly they came upon another pair of turkeys, and this time Joe missed, and Jasper secured his bird, at which he was highly elated, as the shot put him even with his friend.

The turkey was a heavy one, and Jasper was compelled as a penalty for his luck, to carry it; but he did so quite willingly, until they came in sight of some agoutis, a small kind of animal that may be likened to the rabbits of the North.

Then he dropped the turkey, leaving it in the care of Ortiz, and he and Joe had fine sport chasing and shooting the agoutis, of which they easily got as many as they cared to carry.

The next specimen of valuable game which they encountered excited Ortiz, who was overjoyed at finding a tapir.

Joe was the lucky one who first discovered it,

and in his astonishment and delight he dropped his load of game.

"Look, Jap! Look, Juan!" he eagerly exclaimed. "If that ain't a baby elephant, may I never see the States again!"

"Then you will never see them again," replied Ortiz. "There are no elephants in Brazil."

"It does look like an elephant," said Jasper. "If we could catch it and carry it home, what a curiosity it would be!"

"We will have it, but you will not carry it home," rejoined the guide, who had already cocked his rifle.

The boys were quite excusable for supposing that the animal they saw was a baby elephant, as its trunk and general appearance gave it the look of a diminutive Jumbo.

It was quietly walking among the trees, browsing on the young shoots of bushes and vines, entirely unconscious of the presence of enemies.

"We must not lose it," said Ortiz. "I will take the first shot, and you must be ready to fire at the word."

He crept stealthily toward the tapir, aimed so as to hit it just behind the left shoulder, and fired.

The bullet was true to its aim, and the animal, throwing up its trunk, fell over on its left side, but rose again, and another bullet was needed to finish the work.

"What is it?" asked Joe, as they stood over this singular game.

"It is what we call an anta," replied the guide. "I do not know what name you give it."

"I know it now!" exclaimed Jasper. "The name has just come to me. You must have seen it in a menagerie, Joe. It is a tapir."

"They are getting to be quite scarce in these parts," said Ortiz, "though there used to be many of them along the Amazon and all through these forests. I am sure that I have not met one for a year, and I had almost forgotten that there were such creatures as antas. We are in great luck to-day."

"Is it good to eat?" inquired Jasper, with a quizzical smile.

"It is very good to eat. We have made no mistake here. The meat will please you better than the finest beef, and do you see this hump at the back of the neck? That is one of the greatest delicacies known to Brazil."

The guide quickly and skillfully skinned and cleaned the tapir, cutting off the hump and the choicest parts of the meat, which he slung so that he could carry them conveniently.

"Now we have game enough," he said. "We are all loaded with more meat than we will be able to eat, and we must not shoot anything more."

But before they reached the river a temptation presented itself which the lads were quite unable to resist.

It was a stag, which bounded out from among the trees, and was so handsome and graceful that an involuntary cry of admiration burst from the lips of the hunters.

The beautiful creature caught sight of the strange two-legged animals as soon as it was seen by them; but Jasper dropped his turkey,

and Joe dropped his agoutis, and each of them hastily brought his rifle to his shoulder.

Jasper was the first to fire, but Joe was hardly a shade behind him.

The stag was badly wounded but would have escaped if the lads had not understood the capabilities of their repeating-rifles.

Two more bullets brought him to the ground, and they ran to him, reaching him just in time to see him draw his last breath.

"Look at his eyes!" exclaimed Jasper—"his poor, pleading eyes! I am so sorry that we killed him."

"When did you begin to get so girlish, Jap?" demanded Joe. "It's a big thing to kill a deer, and this one is good to eat, ain't he Juan?"

"Very good to eat. The flesh is excellent, and, as we are now near the river, we can easily take as much of it as we care to use."

"Yes, indeed," said Jasper. "We will have a fine choice of food, and if any of it is likely to spoil on our hands we can feed it to the alligators."

The stag was neatly skinned and dressed by Ortiz. The best parts of it were selected and hung upon a pole, and the hunters trudged on with as much of a load as they cared to carry.

It was nearly dark when they reached the river, but they soon built a fire and prepared a fine supper of tapir hump and agouti, to which their excellent appetites enabled them to do ample justice.

Ortiz was determined that as little of the meat as possible should be wasted, as he expected to make no more stops than were absolutely necessary. So he and the boys set to work after supper to cut up the flesh of the tapir and the venison, which they hung over a big smoke, as they had treated the manatee meat.

"It was a big day, by ginger!" exclaimed Joe Baggs, while they were thus engaged. "You gave it to us straight, Juan. There is as much game in these woods as anybody need want to look at. It would suit me exactly to stay right here and do nothing but hunt."

"You could live very well and very easily," replied Ortiz, "unless you should happen to sleep out in the forest at night alone."

"Oh, I wouldn't do that. No bloodsucking for me."

"There is the rattlesnake that must be guarded against, too, and some other serpents, particularly the sucuriu."

"What sort of a beast is that?"

"The constrictor—the anaconda—the kind that drops from the trees, and picks you up, and crushes you, and swallows you. Then, again, a mucura might take a fancy to you."

"Is that another snake?"

"That is a great monkey, like the gorilla of Africa, and a very savage fellow he is; unlike the barbado, which is about as big, but more mischievous than wicked."

"That will do for to-night, Juan. I wouldn't sleep alone in the forest, and I wouldn't go swimming in that river, either."

CHAPTER IX.

TWO BOYS AND A BIG MONKEY.

It was quite an uneasy feeling that settled upon Jasper Hundley and Joe Baggs when Ortiz informed them at last that they had reached the country of the Yuaquiras.

After weeks of hard but pleasant labor—though it had finally grown to be rather monotonous and tedious—they had come to the end of their voyage.

The journey was but half-finished, it is true; yet, if they should be successful in the great object of their mission, the return voyage would be a small matter.

Joe Baggs, who claimed to know something about the savage tribes of his native land, wondered whether the Yuaquiras would prove to be a fierce and bloodthirsty people, anxious to "raise the hair" of inoffensive travelers.

Jasper had other causes of trouble. It was not of his own safety that he was thinking, so much as the position and recovery of his father.

He saw no reason to suspect the Yuaquiras of being a fierce and bloodthirsty race. Juan Ortiz had been among them, and had even learned their language, and had not been harmed by them. Jasper's father, too, as far as could be ascertained, had been well treated, though held in captivity.

The question was, how would those Indians treat the canoe party? Would it be safe to let it be known who they were and for what purpose they had come, and how should they proceed to obtain the release of the captive?

These points, though frequently discussed, were of course expected to be finally settled by the guide, who had prepared and matured a plan of his own, subject to such changes as further developments might make necessary.

This plan he made known to Jasper as they approached their destination.

"If we knew why they were keeping your father there," said Ortiz, "and knew how they are treating him now, we would be better able to judge how we ought to act. But that is a mystery which I do not profess to be able to solve, and it seems to me that I must try to get at the bottom of it before it will be safe for you to venture into the Indian village. So I propose to hide you somewhere, while I go to the village alone and learn how matters stand."

"But how and where can we hide?" inquired Jasper.

"I think I can find a place."

A short distance below the village of the Yuaquiras, as he explained to his young friends, the river made an abrupt bend to the right.

Before reaching the bend they would encounter several natural canals or iguarapes, leading into lagoons like the bayous of the lower Mississippi, and some of the lagoons were lakes of no small size.

He proposed to take the party up one of those natural canals, and conceal them there, while he should go on to the Indian village.

This was what was done.

With Ortiz in the lead, the canoes threaded their way through a network of sluggish water-courses, full of fish and abounding in

water-fowl, and not at all lacking, it may be added, in caymans and other reptiles.

The lads would have been highly pleased with this kind of an excursion into the vast forest if they had not been so deeply interested in the expectation of events that were to follow.

They came out into a large lake, whose dark waters were beautifully diversified by several islands.

"Exactly what we want!" exclaimed Ortiz. "We will make one of those islands our hiding-place. No wandering Indians will be likely to explore it during the little while that I expect to be away."

They landed on the largest of the islands, where the trees were as great and the undergrowth as luxuriant as on the mainland, and drew their canoes up out of sight.

As the day was then nearly done, they prepared their supper, making as small a fire as possible, and passed the night in the usual way.

After an early breakfast, the boys, with the most profuse wishes for his good luck and speedy return, said good-by to Ortiz, who entered his canoe and paddled over to the southern shore of the lake.

As this was the first time he had been out of their sight for more than a few minutes at a time since they left Belem, they felt quite lost without him, and were almost disconsolate when he plunged into the forest and disappeared from their view.

"Suppose he shouldn't come back, Jap?" remarked Joe Baggs.

"Oh, he is sure to come back. Those Indians know him, and will do him no harm. I wish I could be as sure that my father is alive and well."

"Yes, that's the great point. I am afraid that we will have hard work to worry through with the time until we get some news. What shall we do with ourselves, Jap?"

"Just nothing but eat and loaf, I suppose."

"We will soon get tired of that. I would like to know what there is on this island."

"Take it out in guessing, Joe. You know that Juan told us to stay right here, and to make no attempt to explore the island, as there is no telling what may turn up to trouble us."

"Oh, bother! It is an island, Jap, and the wild beasts of this country ain't likely to swim over to it. I have no doubt that a leopard hates the water as much as a cat does."

"That may be; but we know that there are monkeys here, as we can hear and see them, and where there are monkeys there may be all sorts of things."

It was not long before the boys learned something more about animal life on the island.

They passed the morning in fishing from the cover of the foliage, and had fine sport, taking care to retain nothing but what they had already proved to be good to eat.

At noon they cooked some of the fish they had caught, and were enjoying a hearty dinner, when something unusual occurred.

The chattering and howling of the monkeys, and the discordant cries of myriads of birds, suddenly became louder and more tumultuous, and then gradually died away and ceased, as if

the hairy and winged creatures had taken flight at the approach of something they feared.

The boys seized their rifles and waited and watched. They had observed a similar phenomenon just before they caught sight of the leopard in the forest.

Then the sound of footsteps caught their attentive ears, as if some person was prowling about among the trees, stepping very carefully and stealthily.

"Injuns!" muttered Joe.

The creature that soon came in sight was no Indian, though it walked erect as a man walks.

It was a very large specimen of the monkey tribe, its body covered with hair, a big beard on its face, its long tail dragging the ground when it was not swinging about, and its sharp white teeth showing quite savagely.

"A gorilla," said Jasper.

"One of those things that Juan told us about," replied Joe.

"Yes, a mucura, or a barbado."

"Well, Jap, whatever it is, I reckon we are enough for him. There's no foolishness about these rifles of ours."

If the big monkey had designs upon the lads, he was in no hurry to carry them into execution. In fact, his movements seemed to be actuated by curiosity, rather than by any worse motive.

He walked stealthily about, swinging his tail, showing his white teeth, and circling around the position of the strangers, so that he kept them continually turning to face him, in order to guard against his too near approach.

His cautious steps, indeed, were all the while bringing him nearer to them; but he was apparently so harmless that they were disposed to be amused at his maneuvers, and began to laugh and joke about him.

"Look out, old fellow!" said Jasper. "You had better not come too close, or you might get hurt. It was very polite of you to call around; but we can't stand too much familiarity."

The hairy creature chattered and grinned, as if desirous of currying favor with the superior race.

Joe tossed a small stone at him; but he merely picked it up, put it to his mouth, and grunted as he threw it away.

"The wicked wretch!" exclaimed Jasper. "I am sure he said damn!"

Joe tossed toward him a stick from which the fire had not yet disappeared. He picked it up, but dropped it immediately, chattering violently, and looking very ugly.

"I think we have had enough of his company," said Jasper. "I shall invite him away as politely as I can."

The lad drew a revolver from his belt, and fired in the direction of the unwelcome guest, but in the air.

The flash and the smoke, together with the noise of the explosion, frightened the monkey, and he turned tail and ran away swiftly, disappearing among the trees.

After they had got rid of the big monkey time passed slowly with the two lads; but the afternoon wore away gradually, and before it was ended they were rejoiced by the welcome

sight of Ortiz paddling toward them in his canoe.

He had returned in safety—that much was certain—and his countenance, as he faced them in paddling, did not look sad.

His canoe had hardly touched the shore of the island when Jasper questioned him eagerly.

"Your father is well and safe," replied Ortiz.

"We will go to the village in the morning."

This was good news enough for the present, and Jasper helped him to moor his canoe, while Joe hastened to build a fire for supper.

"It is a good thing to know that my father is well and safe," said Jasper; "but what are the chances of getting him away from there? Why are those Indians keeping him?"

"Your father is a physician," replied Ortiz.

"Yes, he used to practice medicine; but what of that?"

"It seems that he effected a remarkable cure of the chief's son. At least, the Indians considered it a wonderful cure, and they keep him for the purpose of profiting by his services."

"If I was him," muttered Joe, "I'd p'ison the whole outfit."

"How can we hope to get him away, then?" demanded Jasper.

"That is more than I can say at present. We must go to the village and watch our chances—that is all."

CHAPTER X.

THE WHITE GOD.

JASPER was highly excited when they prepared to leave the island the next morning, and Joe shared to a considerable extent in the feelings of his friend.

The guide cautioned them, for the sake of the success of the enterprise, to control their emotions, so that the Indians should not suspect the interest they took in the prisoner.

"Your father," he said to Jasper, "is not only held by the Indians as a physician, but they regard him, or pretend to, as a sort of a god. You must humor them in that, and as soon as you see him must bow down before him and worship him."

"I always did worship him," replied Jasper.

"You needn't worry about me."

"I never got into the way of bowing down before anybody," remarked Joe; "but I reckon I can take a whirl at it with Jap's dad."

The voyagers paddled out of the lake, and through the network of lagoons into the river, which they ascended until they passed an abrupt bend, and there they came in sight of the village of the Yuaquiras.

Their approach had been watched and signaled, and the Indians flocked down to the river-bank to meet and welcome them.

The Yuaquiras were quite unlike the Indians of North America, but did not differ much in their general appearance from those which the voyagers had met along the lower river.

They were tall and of large frame, their skin a light red, and their hair abundant and bushy. Their ears were stretched nearly down to their shoulders by the weight of heavy silver rings, and large pendants of the same metal hung from their noses. As for their clothing, it may

simply be said that a tailor would have seen no chance to make a fortune among them.

A bit of cloth about the loins was the only apparel of most of them; but the chief and some of the leading men of the tribe made more pretensions to style.

The chief, Itacuri by name, was a dignified elderly man of really fine appearance. He wore a tunic of blue cotton, covered by a light cloth, brownish in color, of the silk that is made from the suma-uma, and his hair was fancifully arranged and decorated with bits of metal, shells, and various trinkets.

He spoke in a friendly tone to Ortiz, and was condescending to the two lads, who, as they understood nothing of what he said, could only bow and stare.

The Indians gathered about the canoes, examining them curiously and jabbering at a great rate.

Ortiz, who was afraid that they might develop pilfering propensities, spoke to the chief, who detailed a guard to watch the property of the strangers.

Jasper Hundley was extremely eager to see his father; but, acting under the directions of the guide, he restrained his impatience, and was soon rewarded by the information that he would be taken at once to the prisoner.

Itacuri led the way, followed by the strangers, and accompanied by his son Italumba and a few men of prominence in the tribe.

Near the middle of the village they stopped in front of a house, or hut, which was larger and finer than any of the others, except that of the chief, which Ortiz pointed out to his young companions.

It was open at the front, except that a curtain of such silk as Itacuri's robe was made of hung down over the space where a door might have been.

Before entering, the chief and the other Indians prostrated themselves on the ground, and went through a series of mummeries that consisted mainly of chattering and gesticulating.

This performance increased the impatience of the two lads; but at the same time it had the good effect of reminding Jasper of the part he was to play, and he whispered to Joe to behave himself and keep his face straight.

After a while Itacuri drew aside the curtain, and the interior of the house was revealed.

It was a square room, with an open space for a window at the back, over which hung a curtain that admitted the light. The floor was covered with handsome skins of the leopard and the jaguar, and with soft furs of the monkey. The walls were hung with the beautiful bark of the taluris, which was here and there looped up in graceful folds, and elsewhere was covered with specimens of humming birds, beetles, and insects in immense variety. Every available niche and corner of the apartment was filled with stuffed birds, beasts and reptiles.

At one side of the room was a couch of bamboo, covered plentifully with soft furs. In the center was a small table. In a cane easy-chair behind the table a man sat, reading a book.

There was nothing about him to suggest the fact that he was a prisoner.

He was a fine-looking, middle-aged man, with his hair turning gray, and was dressed in the garments of civilization, somewhat the worse for wear, except that in place of a coat he wore a robe somewhat similar to that worn by Itacuri.

He looked up from the book as the curtain was raised, and his face flushed as he recognized his son, who also turned red in the face; but each understood the part he was to play, and there was nothing more than the change of color to cause the Indians to suspect the relation they bore to each other.

The chief and the other Yuaquiras prostrated themselves before the white man, who stood up and acknowledged their salutations rather coldly.

Then they stepped aside, and made room for Ortiz and the lads, who went through the same ceremony.

Mr. Hundley stepped forward, gave each of the boys his hand, raised them to their feet, and placed chairs for them and their guide.

Then he waved his hand, and spoke in their own language to the Indians, who retired to a little distance, but remained in view of the group in the house.

"My dear boy," said Mr. Hundley, speaking to Jasper, "you can imagine how it rejoices me to meet you; but we must restrain ourselves, as it would never do to give these Indians cause to suspect that you are my son."

"You can rely upon me, father," replied Jasper. "I will try my best to keep as cool as a cucumber, and Joe Baggs is up to the mark, too."

"That is right. Now you may first give me the news from home, and then tell me why and how you came here."

Jasper soon assured his father that all at home were well, and then proceeded to tell of the letter which had been received from Padre Baramho, and which had caused him to come to Brazil as soon as possible after its receipt, with Joe Baggs as his companion.

As for the details of the expedition, and the adventures of the voyagers on the way, he preferred to leave those to another time as there were more important matters requiring consideration just then.

It was enough for their father to know what their mission was, and that they had safely arrived.

"You are the point of the business, sir," he said, "and we want to know how we are going to get you away from here."

"That is a question that has been puzzling me for a long time," replied Mr. Hundley, "and I am no nearer its solution than I was when I began to consider it. I am well treated, as you may see, more like a prince than a prisoner, and am not confined; but I am always closely watched. I have explored the forest thoroughly, and have collected a great many beautiful and valuable specimens. The Indians believe that I use them for the healing art, and look upon my occupation very reverently; but, wherever I go, and whatever I do, my guards never lose sight of me. I assure you, Jasper, that I have not yet seen the slightest opening for an escape."

"I am very sorry to hear it, sir, and that gives the case a bad look; but we came here to bring you away, and we have got to do it, somehow or other."

"We must all set our wits at work to contrive a plan. It will be impossible to fight these Indians, and they are too keen to be outwitted by us. I suppose you know why they are keeping me here."

"Oh, yes. Juan told us about that. It is because you cured the chief's son, and they want you to doctor the tribe."

"That is not all, my son. There is another matter that is of a great deal more importance to them, as they suppose."

"What is that, sir?"

"It is about a very valuable parcel of diamonds that is buried somewhere about here."

"Diamonds?" exclaimed all three of his listeners, opening their eyes wide.

"Yes. I suppose there is no doubt that the diamonds were buried near this village, and the Indians believe that I can find them. That, in fact, is what they imagine I was after when I was hunting specimens in the forest. I will tell you all about it."

Mr. Hundley proceeded to tell substantially the same story that Ortiz had told to the boys in their camp near the mouth of the river, shortly after the death of the Indian who attacked Jasper.

"As I told you," he said in conclusion, "Itacuri believed that I could find these diamonds, and he set me to search for them again and again, promising me my liberty if I would find them and give them to him. I have been to the great sapucaia tree, and have looked and dug all about it, but in vain. Itacuri supposed that I could make some sort of a charm to discover them, and I told him that my magic would not work while I was a captive. But he shook his head, and looked at me as if he understood what I was aiming at. These savages know the value of diamonds well enough, and the value of the reward that is offered for them. Why, Jasper, what are you crying about, my boy?"

Tears, indeed, glistened in the lad's eyes; but they were tears of joy.

"Oh, father!" he exclaimed, in a voice that was full of suppressed emotion. "It is all right. God has sent us here, and has guided us all the way. If that is what is keeping you here, you will soon be free. We will find the diamonds, and will take you home."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Hundley, in utter astonishment. "Find the diamonds? I hope you have not gone crazy."

"The boy is right," said Ortiz. "The diamonds will be found."

"We've struck it rich this time," remarked Joe Baggs. "Biggest thing of the season."

"What do you all mean?" again demanded Mr. Hundley. "Will somebody please tell me?"

"You have told us a story, father," replied Jasper, "and now I will tell you one."

He proceeded to relate the adventure at the mouth of the river, including the finding of the paper on the body of the Indian, and its explanation by the guide.

Ortiz corroborated his statements, and showed

the paper, which Mr. Hundley took and eagerly examined.

"You were right, Jasper," he said, "when you told me that God had guided you. It is wonderful that this paper should have come into your hands, and the manner in which you obtained it is still more wonderful. Yes, I believe we will find the diamonds. I will keep this paper, if you are all willing, and will study it more closely. Say nothing about the matter, and leave me to arrange with the Indians."

It was agreed that he should keep the paper, and should have the entire management of the affair.

"It is now more necessary than ever," said he, "that the Indians should have no cause to suspect your errand here. Leave me now and be very reverential as you go."

All three prostrated themselves before "the White God," and left his presence.

The curtain was drawn, and they followed Itacuri to his house.

CHAPTER XL. THE MANCHETTA.

THE strangers were hospitably entertained by Chief Itacuri at his house, which was a larger structure than that occupied by Mr. Hundley, but was furnished in much the same style, except that it lacked his collection of beasts, birds, reptiles and insects.

A hut was assigned to them for their lodging, and they were fed at the chief's house, where the boys went into raptures over the Indian cookery, and ate so heartily that Joe pronounced himself "fit to bust."

He declared that nothing would please him better than to remain with the Yuquiras, and spend the rest of his life in hunting and fishing and eating.

In the evening they visited Mr. Hundley, who explained to them the arrangement he had made with Itacuri for the purpose of regaining his freedom.

He had told the chief that he could only find the buried diamonds, if at all, by the use of his magical power, which had been weakened by his long captivity.

Since the arrival of the three strangers from his native land he had felt the power returning to him, and he believed that with their assistance he would be able to discover the lost treasure.

It was essential to the success of his operations, he went on to say, that he should prosecute the search with no witnesses but the strangers.

To this Itacuri demurred, naturally fearing that he might lose both the White God and the diamonds, and it was finally agreed that the searchers should be surrounded by a *cordon* of Indians sufficient to prevent their escape, but the guards should be stationed at such a distance as Mr. Hundley should indicate.

It was settled that the search should take place the next day, and this promised to be an exciting piece of business for the boys.

But, before they were ready to start for the forest, something occurred that postponed the

diamond-hunting expedition, and threatened disaster to at least one of the party of whites.

The Indians who were detailed by Itacuri to guard the canoes of the voyagers duly obeyed the orders of the chief, but went a little further.

They prevented all the other Indians from touching the queer craft of the white people, but did not attempt to restrain their own curiosity, which prompted them to rummage the canoes, and investigate their contents.

In the canoe of Juan Ortiz they found the manchetta, or felling-knife, which had belonged to the Indian who made the attack upon Jasper at the camp near the mouth of the river.

Very soon there was a great excitement among them on account of this unlucky manchetta.

They recognized it.

It had been the property, as Ortiz was shortly made to know, of Matamaribo, one of the tribe.

He was an unusually sagacious and enterprising Indian, who had been accustomed to trade for the village with the tribes along the lower river and with the white people. He was then supposed to be on a trading expedition, and had been absent a long time. The first intimation of what might have happened to him came from the discovery of his well-known manchetta.

How did it happen to be in the possession of the white man, and what had become of Matamaribo?

There was an easy answer to this question, and the Yuquiras jumped at once to the conclusion that Matamaribo had been slain, and that Ortiz was his murderer.

The manchetta was brought to the village, where it was extensively examined and commented upon, and the result of the discussion was that Ortiz was arrested and placed under guard.

He was taken to Itacuri, was confronted with the manchetta, was informed who had been the owner of the weapon, and was asked to explain how it had come into his possession.

Fearing that he might bring his young comrades into the same trouble in which he found himself, the faithful guide contented himself with declaring that he had found it, and refused to make any further explanation.

He was then taken away, and was securely confined until the chief and his advisers could consider the case.

Jasper and Joe knew that some sort of an accusation had been brought against him, and perceived that the manchetta was connected with it; but they knew nothing of the language, and could not understand the nature and extent of the difficulty.

After Ortiz had been shut up they were allowed access to him, and then they compelled him to explain what had placed him in such an unpleasant position.

"This will never do at all," said Jasper. "It is for our sake, Juan, that you are letting this thing rest on your own shoulders, and we can't allow it. None of us killed that man, and it is best to tell the Indians the truth."

"No, my boy," replied the guide; "that must

never be. It is enough that I am in trouble here, and I need not drag you into it."

"I don't believe you would drag us into it. I believe that it would be best for us all if you should tell the plain, straight truth."

"So do I," remarked Joe. "I believe in the square truth all the time."

"If you don't do it," said Jasper, "I will go to my father, and will make him tell the Indians just how that man came to his death."

Under this pressure Ortiz caused himself to be taken before Itacuri again, and told the story according to Jasper's wishes.

The result was by no means as favorable as the boys had hoped it would be.

Itacuri and his advisers considered the matter, and decided that the statement that Matamaribo had been killed by a cayman was too improbable for them to believe. He had been met by the party of white people, and his manchetta was found in the possession of Ortiz, who admitted that its owner was dead.

The conclusion was that Ortiz had murdered Matamaribo, and that he must pay the penalty.

The chief's son tried hard to have the two white boys included in the judgment; but Itacuri had the diamonds on his mind, and decided that the death of the guide would be sufficient.

His execution was ordered for the next day, being the day after that which had been set for the diamond search.

As soon as he was made aware of this decision Jasper hastened to his father, to whom he explained the peril of Ortiz, and begged him to come to the assistance of the doomed guide, who had grown to be very dear to both the boys.

"This is a very sad affair," said Mr. Hundley. "That Indian doubtless overheard your talk on the steamer, and probably understood it. I do not suppose that he connected you with the diamonds, as you had not spoken of them, but he believed that you were going to try to release me, and he knew how anxious Itacuri was to keep me here. Therefore he intended to kill you and make an end of the expedition. It turns out that his death has brought us bad luck, as well as good luck."

"But you will help Ortiz," insisted Jasper. "They must not kill him."

"You may be sure that I will do the best I can, my son, though I do not yet see how he can be saved. Ah! I have an idea."

"What is it, father?"

"To-morrow there is to be an eclipse of the sun—a total eclipse—as my almanac tells me. The excitement of your arrival and the news you brought caused me to forget it. If I can not prevail on the Indians in any other way. I will bring the eclipse to bear on them. I believe I will do it in any event."

The White God sent at once for Itacuri, and tried to persuade him to revoke the order for the execution of Ortiz, whom he declared to be undoubtedly innocent of the murder for which he was condemned to suffer.

Itacuri shook his head, and positively refused to interfere. The case had been carefully examined, he said, and the decision was final. Matamaribo was one of the most valuable men

in the tribe, and he was dead, and the white prisoner had his manchetta; therefore the white prisoner must die.

"If he dies," replied Mr. Hundley, "I am afraid that my magic will be so weakened that I will not be able to find the buried diamonds."

A quiet smile showed the chief's incredulity.

"You must find the diamonds," he said, "or you shall never leave the Yuaquiras."

"You are cruel and unjust," retorted the White God. "Since that is the case you shall see and confess my power. Unless you let the white man go free, I will cause such a shadow to come over the sun to-morrow morning as shall blot it out, and you shall nevermore have any light. This will prove the innocence of the white prisoner."

The chief smiled again.

"I will believe in your magic," he replied, "when you find the diamonds. The sun has always been there, and there it will always be. I am not afraid."

But the threat of the White God had a strong effect upon Itacuri and his people. They did not believe in it, but were not sure that something of the kind might not happen.

As the hour approached which Mr. Hundley had set, all the Yuaquiras were in the open air, gazing at the sun with curious eyes.

All the strangers but Ortiz were there among them, and the White God was apparently confident in the expected manifestation of his marvelous power.

Again he appealed to Itacuri to release the doomed captive, and again the chief positively refused to interfere.

The sun was shining with undimmed luster in a cloudless sky.

Mr. Hundley looked at his watch, which he had carefully kept running and regulated, and noted the instant of contact.

He stretched out his hand toward the sky.

"Let the sun become darkened to punish the Yuaquiras for their cruelty!" he solemnly exclaimed in the language of the tribe.

The sharp eyes of the Indians noted the black spot which just then touched the edge of the luminary, and an uneasy feeling began to be manifest among them.

As the black spot encroached upon the surface of the sun, they huddled together and gazed at the White God in awe-struck silence.

Again Mr. Hundley appealed to Itacuri, but the chief made no reply, though his face showed that he was greatly troubled.

When half of the face of the sun was blotted out, the Indians began to realize what total darkness would be, and they looked imploringly at their chief and the white man, and many of them bowed their heads and wept.

When the eclipse was almost total, the scene was appalling.

It was nearly as dark as night, and stars were visible, and the day birds went to roost and the creatures of night came out.

The Indians threw themselves on the ground in abject terror, and howled for mercy.

Itacuri, fairly frightened at last, and convinced of the wonderful power of the White God, besought him to avert the dreadful disaster.

"You now know that the white prisoner is innocent," replied Mr. Hundley. "Set him free and I will cause the darkness to pass away."

Men tumbled over each other in the darkness, so eager were they to execute the order which the chief promptly gave, and Ortiz was quickly brought out and taken to his friends.

The eclipse was then total, and the darkness of midnight prevailed.

"Let the darkness go as it came!" exclaimed Mr. Hundley, as he again stretched out his hand.

Immediately the sharp-eyed Indians descried a small slice of the sun in the midst of the darkness. The light increased as the sun emerged from the shadow of the moon, and joyful cries took the place of lamentations.

When the eclipse was ended and the sun was again dazzlingly bright, the Yuaquiras prostrated themselves before the White God, and crowded about him to kiss his hands.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DIAMOND SEARCH.

AFTER the release of Ortiz, the way was clear for the diamond search.

The Yuaquiras were highly elated over their escape from the great disaster of darkness, and over the expected finding of the buried treasure and gave themselves up to feasting and merriment.

Itacuri, however, was so excited about the diamonds, that he took no part in the general jollification, but occupied himself in hastening the preparations for the search.

The White God, then high in favor, was looked upon as the possessor of marvelous powers. Everybody deferred to him, from the chief down to the children, and all his suggestions were immediately acted upon and carefully executed.

But Itacuri had no idea of losing his White God, and meant to make sure that he should not go free until after the discovery of the diamonds.

Therefore a strong force of warriors, all well armed with the weapons of the tribe, was detailed to accompany the white people, and Itacuri and his son Italumba took command of the guards.

Jasper and Joe went to the canoes and brought from there a tape line and a small compass, both of which, and particularly the compass, the Indians regarded with great reverence, as mysterious assistants in the magical ceremonies that were to precede the search.

Mr. Hundley led the party, accompanied by Ortiz and the two boys, and followed by Itacuri and his son and the force of Indian guards.

They had gone but a little way from the village when he pointed out the gigantic sapucaia tree to his companions.

There could be no doubt that the diamond thief had told the truth in regard to the tree, as it was indeed a most conspicuous object in the forest, towering high above its fellows, and visible from a considerable distance.

Yet they had quite a way to walk, as it was more than a mile from the Yuaquira village.

It was not necessary to clear a path to the tree, as that had been thoroughly done by the Yuaquiras when they set their captive to search for the diamonds, and the ground had been gone over again and again.

So they went on in a long procession, the white people in advance, followed closely by Itacuri and his Indians.

On the way Mr. Hundley spoke of the chances and hopes of the expedition.

"There are two great doubts, friend Ortiz," said he. "Each of them makes me tremble, and I confess that I shall be exceedingly nervous until both are settled. In the first place, did the man who stole the diamonds speak the truth when he told when and how he had concealed them?"

"It is my belief that he did," replied the guide. "He must have known that they would be of no use to him in any event, and he could gain his life and liberty by restoring them."

"Well, the chances are that he told the truth, and that is in our favor. In the second place, if the diamonds were really buried out here, we must remember that frequent search has been made for them, not only by the Government expedition, but by various adventurers. It is possible that one of the adventurers may have found them and quietly carried them away."

"Yes, that is possible, but not at all probable. If the Government expedition could not find them, it is not likely that they would be found by any person who did not possess the clew that we have."

"I am not entirely sure, friend Ortiz, that we have the clew. The paper may be merely a record of some person's vain search."

"It seems to me, senior, that you ought not to torture yourself with such possibilities. Surely the chances are all in our favor."

"That's so, father!" exclaimed Jasper. "Juan is right, as he always is. Let us go ahead and find the diamonds, and then go home to mother and little Flora."

Simple as Jasper's words were, they made a great impression on his father, and inspired him with hope and confidence. He stepped forward briskly until he reached the sapucaia tree.

The boys marveled at the sapucaia, at the great size of the trunk, and at the immense height of the tree.

While they gazed and wondered, Mr. Hundley proceeded with the business of the search.

He first showed Itacuri where the guards should be stationed, and they were posted in a circle around the tree and at a considerable distance from it.

This left them out of sight of the white people, but at the same time prevented the escape of any of the searchers.

He then brought out the paper and opened the compass, while the two boys managed the tape line.

Under his orders they measured off the first distance, in the direction given by the paper, and at the end of the measurement a stake was driven into the ground.

When the compass was set for the third course, Mr. Hundley was surprised to perceive that the line given led directly back to the big tree.

He caused the boys to measure the distance according to the figures of the paper, and, sure enough, it brought him back to the sapucaia.

"There must be some mistake here," he said. "We will measure it over again."

The paper was carefully examined, and again the directions were carefully taken, and the measurements were carefully made.

It was soon evident that there had been no mistake.

As Mr. Hundley set his compass at the second stake, and saw that there could be no doubt that the third line led directly back to the sapucaia, his face clouded and he shook his head despondently.

"It is no use," he said. "We have come on a fool's errand. I am afraid, friend Ortiz, that the thief tried to deceive the Brazilian authorities, and has succeeded in deceiving us. If this is really the paper he claimed to have lost, he must have merely jotted down some imaginary courses and distances, quite at random, which are of no sort of use."

"I can hardly believe that," replied Ortiz. "If the lines and figures were made at random, the courses would have been almost sure to strike a tree in this dense forest; but you have run them carefully, and not a tree has been touched."

"There is something in that; yet they merely lead back to the point of beginning."

"Perhaps the figures and lines may be all right, though he did want to fool somebody," suggested Jasper. "He may have been like the bird that hops about to draw people away from its nest. It would be funny if the diamonds are hid in the tree or near it."

"You have hit it, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Hundley. "If the diamonds are here, it is in the tree that we must look for them, and that will account for the fact that all the searchers have failed to dig them up."

He hastened to the sapucaia, and the others eagerly followed him.

The tree was carefully examined, and in its trunk was found a small hole, about which the bark had grown, nearly filling it up.

Mr. Hundley cut a twig from a bush, and sounded the hole with it. The hole was not deep, but was larger than the small opening would have led an observer to suppose.

Suddenly his face flushed, and he declared that he felt something hard, like metal.

As the opening was not large enough to allow a more thorough search to be made, Ortiz was sent to the canoes for an ax.

Two of the Indians accompanied him, by order of the suspicious Itacuri, and Mr. Hundley and the boys impatiently awaited his return.

It seemed an age to them before he came back with the ax.

The Indian guards were sent back to their stations, and Ortiz began to cut a hole into the sapucaia.

This was hard wood, and it took time; but the opening was finally enlarged sufficiently for the purposes of the search.

After making sure that there were no snakes inside, Mr. Hundley thrust his arm into the

hole, and drew out a square box of brass, badly discolored by time and damp.

The others crowded close to him, with exclamations of joy and amazement.

Investigation showed them that the box was fastened by a spring-lock. As the thief who hid it had not been kind enough to leave the key attached to it, it was impossible to open it; but none of them had any doubt that it contained the lost diamonds.

The countenance of Ortiz fell as he examined the box.

"What a pity," he exclaimed, "that such a prize should fall into the hands of these Indians!"

"It is a great pity," replied Mr. Hundley, "though I have no doubt that they know the value of the diamonds, or of the money they will bring, as well as we do. Of course we would prefer to keep the diamonds for ourselves; yet we could not honestly claim anything but the reward."

"That would be no small matter," said Ortiz.

"True; but we could not get away from here without being searched by the Indians, if we could get away at all."

"For my part," said Jasper, "I only want my father to be free to go home with me to mother and little Flora."

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed Joe. "Talk is cheap, but those Injuns mean business. They are watchin' us now, and they know that we have found somethin'."

Joe stated the case correctly. He had seen Itacuri approach the party, advancing stealthily from tree to tree, until he was quite near them.

There could be no doubt that his sharp eyes had taken in the situation.

When the chief saw that he was observed, he came forward and joined the party, followed at a little distance by Italumba.

"Have you found the treasure?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Mr. Hundley. "My magic was strong enough this time, and I hope you will believe in it now."

The chief examined the box, but shook his head sadly when he perceived that he could not open it.

"We will go back to the village," said Mr. Hundley, "and there I will open the box."

The Indians were called in, and the searchers and guards, in long procession, marched to the village.

Itacuri refused to let the precious box go out of his lands, and when they reached the village he insisted on retaining possession of it until it was opened.

He evidently suspected that the white people had "put up a job" on him, or that they meant to steal the diamonds.

Ortiz and Jasper went to the canoes, and brought back some tools, with which the box was finally opened.

The precious stones were found in it, and the chief was overjoyed.

The Indians gave themselves up to eating and drinking, and the festivities of the village were abundant and noisy.

Ortiz saw Itacuri put away the box of diamonds, and its disappearance made him very gloomy.

"It is such a pity that those Indians must have the diamonds!" he said to Jasper. "If we could have found a chance to slip out a few of the stones, how nice that would have been!"

"I don't worry a bit about the diamonds," replied the lad. "My father will be free to go home with me, and that is all I care about."

CHAPTER XIII.

ORTIZ AND THE DIAMONDS.

THE next day it was announced that the White God and all the white people were free to go where they pleased and to do as they pleased, and they eagerly availed themselves of those privileges.

Mr. Hundley was naturally anxious to get away and return to his home, from which he had so long been absent under such unpleasant circumstances, and he hastened the preparations for his departure.

The most important of the preparations was the removal of his precious collection of beasts, birds, reptiles and insects, which needed to be packed and stowed with the greatest possible care.

His compulsory sojourn among the Yuaquiras had not been useless to him, as regarded the object of his visit to Brazil. His time had been profitably employed, and his collection was an extensive and valuable one.

The shipping of this collection was a matter of such great importance to him that he could trust the work to no person but himself and his son, and even Jasper was not allowed to touch anything except under his own directions.

In order that there might be room enough for all of them and for the freight they had to carry, Jasper purchased from the Yuaquiras an uba, or Indian canoe, and turned over his own canoe to his father.

This uba was an open boat, made from the trunk of a tree, hollowed and shaped with great labor, and had a pointed prow and a broad stern.

It would be hard to say whether the Yuaquiras were grieved or rejoiced at the departure of the white man whom they had so long kept as a precious possession.

His fame as a physician, which had first made him valuable to them, had not been sustained. He had not been able to cure all the cases that were brought to him, especially as his supply of medicines was soon exhausted, and some of his patients had died in spite of his treatment.

It had thus been discovered that he was not infallible, and that was a death-blow to his reputation as a medicine-man in a wild tribe.

The recent displays of his magical power, in producing thick darkness in the daytime, and in finding the case of diamonds, had greatly increased his reputation among the Yuaquiras, and it may be doubted if they did not really regard him as a deity. But it was admitted that there was danger to the tribe in his possession of such power, as he might be tempted to use it so as to do them the greatest damage.

On the whole it may be said that they viewed his approaching departure without regret; but they showed their kindly feeling by copious presents of food and curiosities, and by offering their services to assist the work of preparation.

Ortiz, who had been so pleasant and bright and helpful during the voyage up the river, was very moody and sad as the preparations progressed.

He seemed to take little interest in them, and hardly attended to the outfitting of his own canoe, going gloomily about the village, and casting longing glances at the chief's house.

It was the diamonds that troubled him, and he spoke about them again to Jasper who was his favorite and confidant.

"It is such a pity that we must leave those diamonds behind us!" he said. "I believe we could get hold of that box, and carry it away with us, if we should try."

"I wish you could get that notion out of your head, my dear Juan," replied Jasper. "Can't you forget the diamonds? We have got all the good out of them that we can get, and that is a great deal. They are not ours, anyhow."

"But we could claim the reward, and that is well worth having."

"We will speak to the authorities down the river, then. We will tell them how we found the diamonds, and you shall lead an expedition back here to recover them from the Indians. You will surely be well paid for that."

"A bird in hand is worth two in the bush," insisted Ortiz.

"I am afraid, Juan, that if you let that thing prey upon your mind, you will be doing something rash and bringing us into trouble."

Ortiz did not mention the diamonds again, but Jasper was sure that he had not forgotten them, and that fact gave him a feeling of uneasiness.

He spoke of the matter to his father; but Mr. Hundley hoped that no trouble would arise from the guide's infatuation. They would soon get him away from the Yuaquira country, and then all would be well.

The preparations for departure were finally completed, and the voyagers were ready to begin their journey down the river.

There was a noisy leave-taking at the village, accompanied by a grand feast in honor of the strangers. The Indians crowded about them to kiss their hands, made the most extravagant expressions of regret at their departure, and loaded them with more presents than they could carry.

This was the last they were to see of the Yuaquiras, as not an Indian was to accompany them to the river to see them off.

While it was the etiquette of the tribe to welcome strangers on their arrival with great ceremony, it was considered the height of bad manners to watch their departure, as such a procedure might look as if they were glad to see them go, or suspected them of having stolen something.

So the white people went unattended to their canoes, which were moored about a mile above the sharp bend of the river.

Everything was ready, and all but Ortiz had entered their canoes, when the guide stopped,

and put his hand to his forehead, as if a thought had suddenly occurred to him.

"I must run back to the village," he said. "I have forgotten something there. Wait for me, or leave my canoe, I will return directly."

Mr. Hundley and Jasper called to him; but he made no answer, and ran off toward the village.

The others came out of their canoes, and stood on the bank, staring at him in amazement.

"This is a very strange freak," said Mr. Hundley. "What can he possibly have forgotten?"

"I doubt if he has forgotten anything," replied Jasper. "I am afraid it is something that he has not been able to forget."

"What is that?"

"The diamonds."

"Indeed! Is he so crazy as that?"

"It looks like it, father. He has had diamonds on the brain ever since we found them. He told me a little while ago that he knew just where they are, and that he really thought he ought to get them and bring them away."

"Poor fellow! If that is what is the matter with him, I am afraid that he will only succeed in getting into trouble."

"That is it, sir, I am sure. He has waited until we were down here and out of the way, and the Indians think we are gone, and now he means to sneak back and get the diamonds."

"Suppose we run after him," suggested Joe. "Perhaps we could catch him and stop him."

"There is no hope of that," replied Mr. Hundley. "If the Indians get angry with one of us, they will be angry with all, and we must not risk any more lives. Loose the painters, boys, and stand by the canoes, so that if trouble comes of this we may be ready to run. I will stay on the bank and look for Ortiz."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF ORTIZ.

JASPER was right; it was for the jewels that Ortiz went back to the Indian village.

He had carefully noted the spot where Itacuri put the box. It was on a stool at his house, at the back part, and near the stool was an open space intended for a window.

The chief knew that his own people would not touch the diamonds, and he caused them to be watched while the white people remained in the village.

After the departure of the strangers there would be no necessity for such precautions, and this was what the guide had calculated on.

There was reason to believe that he would be able to return to the village, approach the rear of the chief's house unobserved, put his head through the window, abstract the box, and return to his friends without being discovered.

In that event he could claim the entire reward for the recovery of the diamonds, as the other white people had abandoned their interest to the Yuaquiras.

When he left the canoes he started off at full speed because he wanted to get away from his

friends, who would naturally seek to detain him. But when he had cleared the open space that separated the bank of the river from the forest, he slackened his pace, and made a slight *detour*, to avoid being seen by any Indians who might be loitering about the village.

In this he was successful, or appeared to be so. He was sure that he saw no Indians, and believed that he had not been seen by any of them.

He emerged from the forest at a point directly in the rear of the chief's house. There was an open space of some thirty yards between him and that object, but it was mostly covered by quick-growing tropical plants.

He threw himself on the ground, and crawled among the plants and grasses, which nearly or quite concealed his form.

Thus he wormed himself forward until he reached the rear of the chief's house, when he rose upon his feet, and looked in at the open window, which was merely covered by a light curtain.

No person was visible in the house, and the box of diamonds was on the stool where he had last seen it.

He reached in his hand and seized it, and his face was bright with joy as he turned to escape.

But it happened that the chief's son, Italumba, had been loitering near his father's house, and noticed a suspicious movement of the leaves and grasses at the rear, proceeding from the direction of the forest.

Wondering what it could mean, he got his spear, and stationed himself where he could watch and discover what strange animal was thus making its way toward the village.

When Ortiz appeared at the back of the house, Italumba naturally suspected his motive, and when he put his hand in at the window and drew out the box, the suspicion became a certainty.

Italumba threw his spear at the white man, and raised an outcry that alarmed the village.

Ortiz dodged the spear, and sought safety in flight, no longer so confident of the success of his daring enterprise.

This time he did not make a *detour* through the woods, but took the straightest possible course to the point on the river where he had left his friends.

Italumba hastened in pursuit of the fugitive, picking up his spear, and was followed by the Indians whom his alarm had brought out. Others joined in the pursuit, and the white man was soon leading a long train of excited Yuaquiras.

When they learned that he had carried off the box of diamonds, their anger was extreme. Many of them were armed with blow-tubes, and they pressed forward at the top of their speed, anxious to reach the fugitive with their poisoned arrows.

But he ran like a deer, and still might hope to be able to reach the canoes and escape.

Just as he reached the open space that separated the forest from the river he felt a sharp sting in his back, and the numbness that followed told him that he had been struck by a poisoned arrow.

The numbness increased so rapidly that it was

with the utmost difficulty he urged himself forward.

He no longer hoped to escape.

It seemed a long time to Mr. Hundley that he stood there on the bank, waiting for the return of the guide.

His anxiety was extreme, but was no greater than that of the two boys in the canoes, who were continually asking him if he yet saw anything of Ortiz.

He espied him at last, running through the timber, and would have uttered a cry of joy if he had not at the same moment caught sight of the crowd of Indians who were pursuing the guide.

"Shove off your canoes!" he shouted to the boys. "Ortiz is coming, but the Indians are after him!"

He watched the guide as he ran at the top of his speed, and could see that the Indians were not gaining on him; but his anxiety became intense when he perceived that many of the pursuers were armed with blow-tubes, and that their deadly little arrows were flying thickly after the fugitive.

At last Ortiz stopped, staggered for a moment, and then pressed on with slackened speed and evidently with great difficulty.

Mr. Hundley, sure that he had been struck, ran forward to meet him.

As they met, the guide staggered again and dropped on the ground.

As he fell, he held out the brass box that contained the diamonds.

"Take it and run!" he feebly exclaimed. "Save yourself; never mind me. I am dead."

There could be no doubt that he was dying, and there was nothing for Mr. Hundley to do but to obey his injunctions.

The Indians were coming up rapidly, and their arrows were flying dangerously near.

Mr. Hundley ran to the bank, jumped into his canoe, and paddled away from shore with all his might.

The boys, who were already in the stream, obeyed his hasty order and paddled for their lives.

"Where is Ortiz, father?" asked Jasper.

"Dead!" was the reply, and it gave the paddlers new strength and energy.

The Indians soon appeared on the bank, and sent a flight of arrows after the canoes; but they were then out of reach of the deadly missiles.

After howling on the bank for a while the crowd of pursuers suddenly turned away, and in a few moments had disappeared from view.

"We are safe!" exclaimed Jasper, as he stopped paddling.

"Safe just now," replied his father; "but how long will we be safe? I really don't know how we are to get out of this."

"We will go right on down the river, I suppose."

"But the Indians will get their canoes and pursue us."

"I guess we can run away from them, sir."

"You don't understand the matter, Jasper. They have a number of ubas on the lower side of the bend, and will run across the neck and cut us off."

Jasper whistled. This fact gave the situation a very unpromising look, and their escape was at the least very doubtful.

They were well armed, it is true, and could make a stubborn fight; but it was not likely that even repeating-rifles would avail against the numbers of their foes.

"That's the game for us!" exclaimed Joe, pointing at a large floating island that was slowly sailing down the stream. "Let's board that craft and hide."

It was their only chance, and the boy's suggestion was acted on at once.

They "boarded" the island on the side opposite to the Yuaquira shore, hauled up their canoes, and concealed them in the thick foliage.

CHAPTER XV.

A HOT PURSUIT.

THE floating island on which the voyagers had established themselves was not one of the largest of its kind, but was big enough for their purpose, being thickly covered with trees and vines and other forest growth, amply sufficient to conceal them from the view of those on the shore.

It floated slowly with the current, and their hope was that they would be able to pass the Yuaquiras unsuspected. If the enraged Indians should take it into their heads to examine the island, the only recourse would be a flight or a fight.

As the island rounded the bend, fortunately keeping well to the eastern side of the river, Mr. Hundley stationed himself where he could watch the Indians without being seen by them.

He soon caught sight of them, and reported to the boys that the western bank was lined with them, and that several canoes at the water's edge were loaded with as many men as they would hold.

The men in the canoes, however, were making no movement, but appeared to be awaiting directions from those on the bank, who were looking up the river, doubtless with the object of watching the approach of the white people.

They waited and watched in vain, as the canoes of the white men did not come in sight, and some of them could be seen running up to the point, to get a view of the river above the bend.

In the mean time the island was slowly floating past their position, and every moment was valuable to the anxious voyagers.

When the scouts who had gone up to the point returned to the main body, it was evident that they suspected a trick, as there was a commotion among them, and some could be seen pointing at the floating island, while the ubas left the shore and began to scatter over the surface of the river.

The island was then below the point from which the ubas had started; but they could of course easily overtake it, and Mr. Hundley's anxiety was extreme as he watched them and wondered what they meant to do.

At first their object seemed to be to watch the river and look out for the expected canoes; but after awhile their attention was turned

more strongly to the island, and one of the ubas started toward it as if with the intention of examining it.

Mr. Hundley left his station, and told the boys to keep themselves concealed while he would watch the movements of the Indian canoe. If no others should approach the island, he considered himself capable of dealing with the occupants of that one.

The uba slowly skirted the island, which the Indians examined as they paddled around it; but even their sharp eyes failed to discover any signs of the white people or their canoes.

Evidently they were not satisfied, and determined to make a closer inspection, as they turned the prow of the canoe toward the island as if with the intention of landing.

The other canoes were considerably further up the river, nearly in a line across it.

Mr. Hundley, with his rifle in his hand, watched the landing, ready to open fire upon the Indians if it should become necessary to do so.

An unexpected circumstance intervened to prevent that necessity.

Hardly had the prow of the uba touched the island when an outcry arose from its occupants—yells of pain and fear, followed by the noise of some great creature thrashing about among the trees and bushes.

Mr. Hundley knew what the matter was, as he could see the upper part of an immense sucuriju, a serpent of the constrictor tribe, which had unwound itself from a tree, and had seized one of the Indians in its formidable folds.

His cries were quickly stifled, and the thrashing about was caused by the movements of the boa in crushing him to death.

His comrades hastened to put a safe distance between themselves and the monster, and paddled out from the island. One of them who had a blow-tube sent a couple of arrows into the mass of serpent flesh. But it was too late to help the man who had been captured by the constrictor, as his fate was already decided.

The uba was paddled toward the fleet up the river, its occupants signaling as they went.

When it joined the fleet, all the prows were headed toward the island, in which direction the Indians began to paddle.

The time had come when the white people must attempt to save themselves by flight.

Mr. Hundley at once spoke to the boys, who sprung to their feet, and the three canoes were quickly shoved off into the river. The next moment their owners were in them, paddling down-stream with all their might.

By this time the floating island was fully a mile below the point where the Indians had embarked, and perhaps a fourth of that distance below their fleet of ubas.

This gave the fugitives an advantage; but they had no time to lose, as the Indians were swift paddlers, and their own canoes were pretty heavily loaded.

Mr. Hundley directed the boys to keep below him, while he acted as the rear guard, resolved to have recourse to his rifle if there should be occasion to use it.

It was soon made plain to him that he would be compelled to fight.

Although the white party were concealed from the view of the Indians when they left the island, the latter soon caught sight of them, and put new force into their paddling, yelling like hounds on the track of game.

If it had been their original intention to make a raid on the island, that idea was speedily abandoned, and they threw themselves into the task of overtaking the fugitives.

They had enough to spur them to exertion, as they were not only anxious for revenge—an anxiety which had not been fully satisfied by the death of Ortiz—but they knew that the precious box of diamonds must be in the possession of the white people, as it had not been found upon the body of the guide.

Mr. Hundley had hoped that the Yuaquiras would be unwilling to continue the pursuit if it should draw them to a distance from the village, especially as night was coming on; but in this hope he was destined to disappointment.

They paddled so vigorously, and made such good time down-stream, that the distance between the pursuers and the pursued was visibly being lessened, and it soon became evident that something must be done.

The Indians were the first to do something.

As there were as many as three men to each uba, some of them carrying five or six, there was at least one man in every boat who could use his blow tube, and those who were in advance began to send their little poisoned arrows flying through the air.

This was anything but agreeable to Mr. Hundley, as the deadly missiles were coming unpleasantly near him, and it was necessary to prevent the blow-tube men from coming too close.

He dropped his paddle, picked up his rifle, aimed at the foremost boat, fired with good effect, and again started down-stream.

This was well enough as far as it went; but he had given the other ubas a chance to gain on him, and they came forward more rapidly than ever.

Jasper and Joe appreciated the peril of the moment, and turned their canoes as he overtook them, so as to face their foes.

The practice which the lads had had with their weapons proved very useful to them then, and the three rifles made quite a change in the face of affairs.

The first volley told upon the canoes, and then all three fired as rapidly as possible, their repeating rifles enabling them to keep a constant stream of bullets pouring into the canoes.

This was too much for the Yuaquiras. They halted, scattered, and finally turned and fled, though one daring uba came within less than a hundred yards of the white party, and an arrow struck the canvas of Joe's canoe, just missing him.

The repeating rifles had saved the lives of the fugitives.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

"I AM mighty glad that we are out of that scrape," remarked Joe Baggs, as they began to paddle leisurely down-stream.

"We may indeed be thankful that we have escaped with our lives," replied Mr. Hundley.

"At one time it seemed to me quite likely that we would be killed or captured; but a kind Providence has cared for us."

"I reckon it must have been Providence, sir. Just think, now, if that big snake had gobbled one of us instead of the Injun! It had a better chance at us, I should say, but maybe it was fonder of Indian meat than of white folks."

"We were in good luck then, Joe, to say the least of it; but after that the Indians would surely have made a finish of us if you boys had not been so handy with your rifles. I had not supposed that you could use them so effectively."

"We practiced a heap before we left home, sir, and we practiced on the steamer, and on the way up the river we shot at real tigers and deer and lots of things. Didn't we, Jap?"

"Yes, we can use our rifles right well, as father has had a chance to see. But I am sorry that we had to get into a fight with those Indians, and even to kill some of them. They were very kind to us, all things considered, and they had a good right to be angry."

"They did give us some real nice grub, Jap, and that's a fact. But think how long they kept your father boxed up, and you know that they had not a bit of right to the diamonds."

"The diamonds! That brass box was what got us into trouble, and caused the death of poor Ortiz."

"That was his own fault," remarked Mr. Hundley. "It was his craze for the diamonds that brought him to his death."

"Yes, sir; he was crazy on that point, but we ought not to blame him. You don't know, father, what a good fellow he was. If you had traveled with him as far as we did, and had seen how kind he was to us, how careful of us, how anxious to take the labor off our hands and keep us out of danger, and how he knew everything and looked after everything, he would have been as dear to you as he was to us. Oh, he was a splendid fellow, and if I had ten thousand diamonds I would give them all to have him back with us."

Joe chimed in with Jasper in his praise of the lost guide, and his name was never mentioned by them except with love and respect.

The voyagers were in no hurry to go ashore, but kept on paddling down-stream until the night was pretty far advanced.

They were then a long distance from the Yu-aquira village, and they took the precaution of landing on the eastern side of the river, where they camped for the night, and kept a good guard, though all were badly fagged out.

On the journey down the river the two lads proved to be capital guides, as their memory of

the upward voyage was quite remarkable, and Mr. Hundley trusted more to their fresh and bright impressions than to his own years and experience.

On the way they delighted in pointing out places and objects that had interested them as they came, though all those recollections were saddened by the memory of poor Ortiz.

Jasper showed the place where he had nearly fallen a prey to a vampire, and Joe pointed out the spot where he had been worried by a gym-notus, and they went ashore for dinner at the place near the mouth of the river where they had buried the Indian whose death led to the finding of the diamonds.

"What are you going to do with the diamonds, father?" inquired Jasper, as they had then safely descended the Yapura to the Amazon, and found themselves within easy reach of their destination.

"There is but one thing to do with them," replied Mr. Hundley. "Of course we must give them up to the authorities. We can claim the reward, but I think it would be right to pay it to the relatives of Ortiz, if we can find them. However, that is for you to decide as you have at least as much right in the matter as I have."

The boys agreed that his proposition was the correct thing, and he cautioned them not to speak of the find again, or even to hint at it, until the stones were safe in the possession of the authorities.

At the first landing below the mouth of the river they waited for a steamboat, which came along in due time, and took them aboard with their canoes and conveyed them safely to Belem.

There they were warmly welcomed by Padre Baranho, who was overjoyed at meeting his American friends again, and was vastly interested and amazed by the story they had to tell him.

With his introduction, Mr. Hundley was put in communication with the proper authorities, to whom he delivered the precious box of diamonds.

It had been so long lost, and so many had searched for it in vain, that hope of its recovery had been abandoned, and the strangers were the lions of the city during their stay in Belem.

The reward was paid to Mr. Hundley; but a careful investigation showed that Ortiz had left no wife nor children, and that it was impossible to get track of any relatives of his.

Therefore his share was given to Padre Baranho, as the guide had been a Catholic, to be expended in masses for the repose of his soul.

The voyagers then took the first steamer for America, shipping their canoes as freight, to be kept as memorials of their expedition, and in due course of time were joyfully received at home by their families and friends.

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